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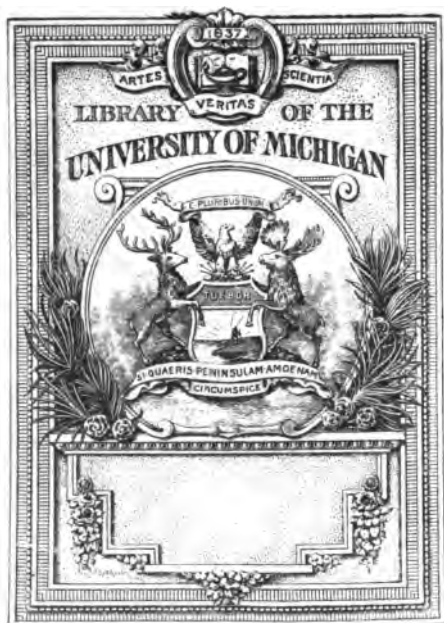
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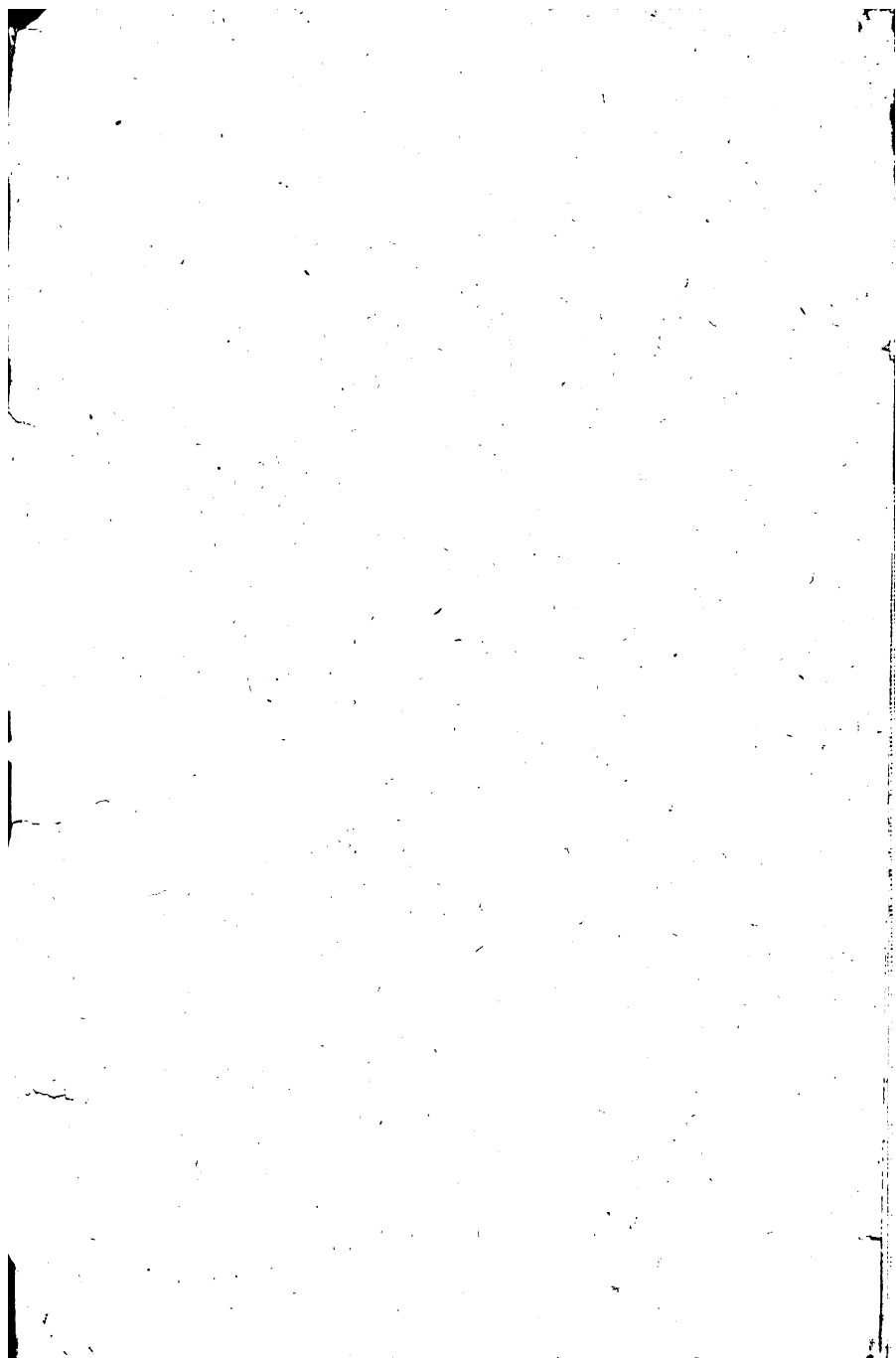
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AN AVERAGE MAN

BY

ROBERT GRANT

AUTHOR OF "CONFESSIONS OF A FRIVOLOUS GIRL,"
"THE LITTLE TIN GODS," ETC.



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AN AVERAGE MAN.

I.

IT was a fine moonlight night in early winter. The vicinity of Madison Square was a blaze of light. The theatres were just over, and a stream of people was pouring along the pavements. Horse-cars, packed to overflowing, jingled by. Democratic omnibuses thundered over the road-bed, side by side with smartly equipped coupés aglow with lanterns. The huge plate-glass windows of the restaurants flashed a dazzling welcome. All was glitter and roar and rush and hurry. The universal movement was of a race where each one fears to be left behind. It is here that the well-known avenues of fashion and trade intersect like the blades of a vast pair of shears, and focus the rumble, bustle, and glare of the metropolis.

Among the crowd that on this particular night peopled this famous New York thoroughfare, where Virtue and Vice touched each other's cheek,—where Plenty delights to flaunt, and Want to sun itself,—were two young men whom a less hurried

gait distinguished from the average passer. They had been to the play, and the larger of the two — a compact, powerfully built fellow, whose hands were deep in the pockets of his ulster — softly hummed, between the puffs at his cigarette, an air from the reigning burlesque of the day. They entered Delmonico's, and, crossing the floor of the restaurant, established themselves at one of the tables.

"Bring a chicken salad, Alphonse, and a quart of that dry Monopole," said he of the ulster, whose name was Woodbury Stoughton, to the sinuous waiter at his shoulder. "I drink Monopole entirely now," he added sententiously, turning to his friend; and his glance began to wander in note of the occupants of the apartment, which was gay with patrons.

Now that one saw him distinctly, he was a handsome young man, with a full round face, void of much color, large brown eyes fringed by dark lashes, and a thick and somewhat blunt nose. Save for a crinkling mustache that, without shading the curves of his firm, humorous mouth, stood out beyond his cheeks, he was smoothly shaven; but his complexion about the lower jaw had the bluish tinge peculiar to those whose beard is dark. Both he and his *vis-à-vis*, Arthur Remington, were in the neighborhood of twenty-five. The latter lacked the robust beauty of his friend. His was a more delicate mould, — a slim figure, somewhat above the average height, and a spare cast of countenance, with fresh-colored, prominent features. He had a thoughtful,

intelligent expression, and eyes that were earnest and nervous. He looked a little tired, and, while waiting for the supper, ate bread and butter with a mechanical eagerness.

"I notice," continued Stoughton, drumming with his fingers carelessly on the table-cloth, "the bride, Mrs. Tom Fielding, is back again. She looks lovely as ever; I don't see that her damask cheek shows any traces of the traditional worm."

"She was Miss Ethel Linton, was n't she?" asked Remington, turning slightly in the direction indicated. The lady in question was one of a merry party at the other side of the room.

"Yes. The story is, you know, she was in love with Willis Blake, but her stern parent lit down on her. Willis had n't a dollar to write after his name; and Tom Fielding stood all ready at the castle gate, so to speak, a-combing his milk-white steed. They say she and old man Linton had some pretty lively times together; but in the end Tom carried off the daughter."

"I've heard something of that sort before. Poor girl! I pity her."

"Well, I don't know. It is n't such a bad thing, now, to marry a million. Tom is n't overburdened with intellect, to be sure; but I guess he's a decent sort of fellow, and will know enough to let her have her head. There's no use looking a gift horse in the mouth merely because he has no brains. Ah! here comes the salad.

"By the way," said Stoughton, presently, "talking

of the other sex, I met that little Cambridge girl you used to be so sweet on in the street yesterday."

"What! Maud Bolles?"

"Yes, Maud Bolles — as if you did n't know well enough! She's married, she tells me, and to one of those scientific duffers. She was quite vivacious for her, and informed me that her husband was engaged at present in weighing thirty guinea-pigs before and after meals, with a view to 'physiological induction.' Well, here's luck!" and Stoughton emptied his champagne glass.

Remington laughed. "You always were hard on those Cambridge girls, Wood. I suppose they were rather provincial as a lot, but somehow or other I used to like them. They seemed to appeal to the best side of me, and had the effect of a sort of moral tonic. I dare say it would have been a first-rate thing for me if I'd married Maud Bolles."

"Pshaw, my dear fellow! Compare her, for instance, with the girls one meets in New York. She can't hold a candle to them for genuine attraction. Spiritual graces are all very well; but — dash it, Arthur — the body counts for something. She had a pretty face, that was all."

"Oh, yes! You're right enough, I dare say. It's strange how things happen in this world. I was pretty well cut up because she would not accept me Class-Day evening." Remington leaned his head on his hand thoughtfully. "Perhaps now I'm glad she did n't; and yet my reasons somehow don't do me proud, as Tom Walker used to say."

"Well, it'll be all the same a hundred years hence, my dear fellow. Some more salad?"

"No, I believe not, thank you. It's curious, is n't it," he continued, "how a fellow grows more worldly in spite of himself? New York knocks the romance out of one very fast. I should like to be able to look at things from the same ideal point of view I used to, a few years ago. I suppose I'm wiser in some ways to-day; but I'm a cold, calculating creature compared to what I was then. This city life does n't leave one much time for theorizing. What a whirl it is!" he added, reflectively, glancing about him; "and it seems to increase every day."

Stoughton scowled, as if irritated by this reminder of current existence, and buried his face in his glass. He set it down with emphasis. "It's all a race for wealth here. A man amounts to nothing in New York unless he has money." He poured out some more champagne gloomily. "Our people have no idea of enjoyment. They don't understand the meaning of the word. Our ancestors—the progenitors of those prim maidens you were admiring just now—went on the principle that everything except money-getting was wrong, and here you have the result. American civilization is based on the theory that life is a sort of 'twenty-minutes-for-dinner' at a way-station, and consequently every one keeps in such a state of nervousness, lest the train may start without him, that a comfortable square meal is out of the question.

If a fellow happened to dawdle over a dish and smack his lips a little, he was sure to hear some one whisper, 'It'll be a warm day for that shrimp before long.' Our fathers were taught from the cradle that the man who lingers in this world over the peaches and cream is bound to get *left*."

Remington laughed. "At least, the present generation is not under the influence of any such delusion."

"Exactly, my dear fellow ; but it does n't know how to *enjoy*. That's the point. Beauty and repose are sealed doors to our race." And Stoughton proceeded further to illustrate his argument with the somewhat disdainful air common to him when roused. He admitted, he said, that it had dawned even upon our people that, after all, happiness is legitimate in this human sphere. The trouble was, nobody understood how to set about obtaining it. Our organisms had become so habituated, in former generations, to judging everything by so-called standards of man's invention, which he had had the presumption to dub divine, they had become starved and contracted. Our sense of the beautiful, the artistic, the exquisite in life was false and illiterate. We had evolved as national traits a cold, lofty moral standard, not lived up to, and an exceeding commercial cleverness. We had made money, and how were we spending it? In tasteless extravagance and ostentation."

Remington was silent a moment. "Yes ; and yet," said he, "underneath it all there lies some-

thing better. I believe that, like our fathers, we too are not content with the peaches and cream. We are at heart an earnest people."

"There spoke the spirit of some Puritan ancestor. My dear fellow, life is meant to be enjoyed. Why not get all the pleasure one can out of it, while it lasts?" And Stoughton sat back in his chair vehemently. His tone betrayed the irritation of one conscious of somewhat sharing at heart, against his will, his opponent's sentiments.

It happened at this moment that a party of three or four young men entered the restaurant, and passed close to the table where Remington and Stoughton were sitting. One of these was a thick-set and rather coarse-looking fellow, who swaggered a little as he walked, with a bullet head and a dogged sort of expression about the mouth that suggested a bull-terrier. The points of his dress were exaggerated and somewhat careless. He darted around him a pair of keen, dark eyes, as if to take in at a breath the occupants of the place. Catching sight of Stoughton, he nodded good-humoredly, and, bending over, whispered across the back of his hand, in passing: "I bought that of yours at seventy-five. It closed six bid, and none offered."

"Hold on a minute, Finchley," said Stoughton, reaching out to detain the new-comer. "Is it going higher? How do things look?"

The broker placed his hand on the other's shoulder, and replied in a confidential tone: "I am a

bull myself upon the situation. We may have temporary reactions, but I look for higher prices. Mr. Gould's brokers," he added, with an increasing earnestness of whisper calculated to convey the impression that his words were not intended for the public, "have been large buyers to-day. The earnings of the roads continue to be enormous. Take your purchase, for instance ; the possibilities of that stock are something tremendous. Its land-grant alone is an empire in itself, — an empire in itself." He dwelt upon the last expression with an air of satisfaction. In the very ugliness of his smile there was something dangerously winning.

"Who's that?" inquired Remington, as the broker rejoined his friends.

"That?" said Stoughton absently, as if lost in calculation. "Oh," he continued, "don't you know Finchley? He's in J. C. Withington & Company. He used to be a clerk in their concern, but proved so serviceable they took him into partnership. I guess he makes his fifteen thousand a year fast enough."

"He is n't very much to look at."

"No, he's a genuine cad ; but he's smart. That's the sort of man, Arthur," he added presently, "to get on in New York. He is n't troubled by any of the subtle considerations that trouble you and me. He'd call that kind of thing filigree work. He knows what he wants to do, and has it all cut out for him. It's his ambition in life to make a million, and he will before he's forty, if his luck does n't

go back on him. Any theory of living not bottomed on the Almighty Dollar would probably strike him as 'hole-in-the-sky.' I tell you what, old man, we're too well educated, we've got too many fine-spun ideas, to succeed in this place." Stoughton spoke a little bitterly. He paused, and, chancing to look up, a strange expression came over him. "Shylock has a daughter," he murmured, and nodded toward the doorway.

Remington turned his head in the direction indicated, and his glance fell upon a young girl standing on the threshold, as if in search of some one in the restaurant. She was wrapped in a white opera-cloak. The light threw her figure, which was sufficiently tall, into perfect relief. Remington felt that he had rarely, if ever, seen such a beautiful being. Her person had exchanged the more fragile grace of extreme maidenhood for a mature but equally symmetrical luxuriance of form. Her large blue eyes and round cheeks — tinged with the delicate olive of the brunette, yet suffused with color, and soft with the bloom peculiar to youth — were crowned with a superabundance of fluffy golden hair, that strayed far down upon her forehead in rebellious tangles. Her mouth was slightly prominent, — her lips full, unwavering, and so brightly red as to display to advantage the whiteness of her small, regular, and almost cruelly incisive teeth. The exuberance of the smile by which she now indicated her discovery of the object of her scrutiny betrayed a keen enjoyment of

life, and a plentiful fund of vitality. There was something vigorous, fearless, almost bold, still not unrefined, in her expression. One realized the presence of a splendid animal. You felt, in regard to her possibilities, as one feels in gazing on a massive block of shining marble before the sculptor's hand has fashioned it.

She was accompanied by a slim youth of albino type and lackadaisical demeanor.

Remington had started at the apparition. "Who is she, Wood?" and his face wore a half-puzzled, half-amused look.

"Miss Idlewild, daughter of Peter Idlewild, the banker and railway magnate. She's a stunner, isn't she? Nothing of the pocket Venus about her; it's the genuine article."

Remington seemed lost in thought. "Yes, it must be the same," he muttered to himself. "But they're not Jews, surely?" he suddenly asked of his friend, recalling the other's previous remark.

"My language was merely metaphorical. I have no cause, my dear fellow, to doubt her Aryan descent," said Stoughton, with a laugh. "But whence all this mysterious cogitation? Do you know her?"

"It was on a steamboat, four summers ago. I was going to Bar Harbor. It was the end of my Junior year, and I was feeling terribly blue, I remember, over a condition in chemistry," said Remington, musingly. "There happened to be very few people on board, and I found myself sitting next to

this girl, near the bow. She wasn't as pretty as she is now, and was more slender-looking; but she'd have passed in a crowd even then. Somehow or other we got into conversation. I think it was a shoal of porpoises that brought us together. She inquired of a deck-hand if they were whales, and —"

"And you were on deck with an answer," laughed Stoughton. "I've been there myself."

"Exactly. She asked me what time it was, which broke the ice completely. I discovered she was travelling entirely alone, and was on the way to visit some relatives in Maine. She seemed inclined to be communicative, and told me that her name was Isabel Idlewild, that her mother was dead, and her father in business in New York. 'And when I'm eighteen,' she said, 'I'm going to live there, and keep house for him. That'll be in two years. I'm only sixteen now. Don't you think I look older than that?' I remember it all distinctly, as if it had been yesterday. There was a moon, and after supper we went and sat aft of the paddle-box, where we could see the glitter on our wake. She produced, from a little reticule she carried, some oranges and a paper of chocolates, which she insisted on my sharing. 'Oh!' she exclaimed, 'isn't it lovely?'"

"What, the confectionery?"

"No, you unsentimental cynic. She had reference to the moon and the general surroundings. 'I suppose,' said she, with a little sidelong glance I

have never forgotten, 'it's perfectly dreadful of me to be talking to you, and telling you all these things. Do you know, the last words my folks said to me before I left home were that I must n't talk to any one. But I do like company; don't you, Mr. — what did you say your name was?'"

"Num, num!" articulated Stoughton, banteringly.

"'I did n't say,' said I, with a laugh. 'Oh,' said she, 'how unkind! but you will write it in my album, I know. I always make my travelling friends write their names in my album;' and therewith she ferreted out of the aforesaid reticule a small autograph-book."

"Did you write it?"

"Yes. I thought at first of writing a fictitious name; but, as I never expected to see her again, I did n't care much. We sat out until about ten o'clock," continued Remington, "and then she said it was time for her to go to bed. I tried to make her stay up longer, but she would n't. I walked with her to the head of the staircase. She was to land at an early hour in the morning. 'You will write to me?' she said, putting out her hand. 'Of course,' replied I, a little staggered withal. 'Address Maud Vandyke, care of the postmaster,' she continued; 'my folks might n't like it if they knew I was corresponding. Good-night!' and I have never seen her since until to-day. She landed before I was up."

"And you never wrote to her?"

"No. I don't know why exactly, but I never did. I wonder if she'd remember me. I've half a mind to speak to her," said Remington, turning slightly so as to command a glimpse of the young beauty, who had joined some friends at a distant table. "You say her father is a banker?"

"Yes. Peter Idlewild & Company. That's he at the table with her. The blonde youth is her brother. The old man is one of your self-made chaps, who came to New York as a boy, without a dollar in his pocket, and has laid up a colossal fortune. Now he's trying to get into society on the strength of his money," said Stoughton. "I'll introduce you, if you like."

"What! do you know her?"

"A little," replied Stoughton, with a grin. "I met her at Newport last summer, once or twice. They had the Spencer Colgate cottage. They're rich, you know, and were invited about more or less. She's a *débutante*. The second wife, who is quite presentable, is anxious to cut a dash 'in the swim.' That's their new house on Fifth Avenue, near Sixty-second Street,—the one that looks big enough for a palace. I'm invited to a blow-out there next week. Come on; I'll introduce you."

Remington offering no objection, the other presently led the way across to where the Idlewilds were sitting. The party included the second Mrs. Idlewild, a beautifully dressed but languid-looking woman, considerably her husband's junior.

"Why, Mr. Stoughton, how *do* you do? We haven't met for ever so long," exclaimed the girl with a frank graciousness, putting out her hand. "I'm real glad to see you again." Her face wore an exuberance of expression unusual with those whom familiarity with the world has taught to temper the display of their emotions.

"Permit me, Miss Idlewild, to present my friend, Mr. Remington." Stoughton spoke with the air of subtle gallantry, of self-mortification, that charms a woman.

As Remington's eyes encountered those of the young beauty, she blushed. "I think we have met before, Miss Idlewild," he said.

"I remember perfectly." She looked him now full in the face with fearless, wide-open eyes, her head coquettishly poised on one side. Stoughton had turned to speak with her parents. "But you never wrote ;" and a mischievous smile parted her red lips, between which her small white teeth shone like pearls.

"I was afraid you would n't answer me. But is there no way in which I can condone my offence?"

"Oh," she cried, "I'll forgive you if you come and see me, Mr. Remington. And where have you been all these years? Let me see! Why, it's four since we met, — four years last summer. Father sent for me that autumn, and I've lived here ever since. Father's married again. That's mother with him. Do you think I've changed much, Mr. Remington?"

"I think you've become very beautiful," whispered the young man.

"Really?" She darted a pleased little glance at him, then dropped her eyes confusedly. "Oh, but you must n't say things like that. I'm grown up now, and am going to be dreadfully proper," she said, drawing herself up with mock dignity. "You know I'm just 'out' now, and — oh, Mr. Remington, I want you to come to my party. It's next week, and I'll get mother to send you an invitation." She paused a moment while Remington bowed his acknowledgments. "It *is* funny, is n't it, we should meet again after so long?" she said. "What a nice time we had that evening! Do you remember how lovely it was on deck, — and the chocolates, and the album, and all? I suppose it was dreadfully improper of me, was n't it? Well, I shall make up for it by being a perfect icicle. Do tell me, Mr. Remington, is Mr. Stoughton a great friend of yours?"

Remington answered that they had always been intimate. "We were classmates in college."

"Really? Oh, then he must be, of course. He's very handsome, *is n't* he? But I'm afraid of him," she added, with a little laugh. "I always feel as if he did n't quite approve of me." As she glanced in the direction of Stoughton, who was still conversing with her parents, Remington detected, as he thought, a trace of something half defiant, as it were, in her eyes. "But I want to introduce you to father, Mr. Remington."

Peter Idlewild was a well-preserved man about sixty years old, of sturdy frame. His face was one which would at once command the attention. A large, beak-like nose; a deep-red complexion; a solid jaw; a firm mouth, the expression of which was shaded but not concealed by a stubby, bristling, iron-gray mustache, a trifle lighter than his still abundant hair; and a pair of glittering, deep-set eyes, of cold, metallic light, guarded by bushy eyebrows of that same iron-gray,—such were its distinguishing features; and, as an offset to these sterner lineaments, a smile—his daughter's smile intensified—suggesting confidences and a deep interest in your welfare, and breathing that peculiar power which word-painters of our day style magnetism. One saw at a glance that it was from him that the daughter had inherited her superb physique and vigor.

"Father, this is Mr. Remington. Mr. Remington and I are old friends;" and she shot a demure smile at the young man.

"How do you do, sir? I am very happy to make your acquaintance, sir," said Mr. Idlewild, in a deep bass voice,— "very happy to make your acquaintance."

He introduced Remington to his wife, and insisted upon ordering more champagne. His voice and gestures were those of one who courts notoriety. It almost seemed that, as if aware good breeding lies beyond the compass of even an iron will or cunning fancy, he enjoyed a revenge in

flaunting his wealth in the face of the community. In his presence, however, one felt unconsciously a dwarfing of self, if no effort were made to withstand its influence, — realized the fascination that flows from a superior, mastering vitality. After the first outburst of hospitality, he sat back in his chair sipping his wine with an important and sphinx-like gravity, while Remington talked to his wife.

"Mr. Stoughton tells me you were classmates at Harvard, Mr. Remington. We saw Mr. Stoughton quite frequently last summer at Newport. I suppose you know Newport very well?" said Mrs. Idlewild, in her listless way. "I shall be glad to see you at our house on Wednesday of next week. My daughter expects a few of her friends."

A few minutes later Mrs. Idlewild rose to depart. There was some little delay about the carriage, and the young men stood chatting with Miss Isabel in the vestibule. While thus engaged, the gay party previously alluded to passed out, with velvet step, and wafting a faint odor as of violets. A tall, lithe young woman of graceful bearing turned her face, which peeped forth from the folds of the drapery wound about her head, back over her shoulder, and nodded in a friendly manner to Woodbury Stoughton. He raised his hat, and flew to her side.

"Permit me to see you to your carriage, Mrs. Fielding."

The aristocratic poise of her head, the springy piquancy of her motions, suggested a thorough-

bred race-horse. Her face expressed excessive refinement and some physical delicacy. It was pretty, but pale and a trifle pinched. Its features were small, save a long, thin, pointed nose. The first bloom of youth was gone. Her beauty was that of a Marshal Niel rose, of which just the edges of the leaves have begun to curl and faintly to discolor.

"That's the bride, Mrs. Tom Fielding," whispered Miss Idlewild to Remington. "I saw her at Newport, when she was Miss Linton. She's lovely, is n't she?"

"Yes. That sleepy-looking man with the brown beard is her husband. What a heavenly night! It reminds me of four years ago."

She was tripping to the carriage now on the arm of the young man. "Was n't it lovely! Ah, but you never wrote!" she murmured banteringly, and her clear, unconventional laugh fell upon the night air.

Stoughton, who had seen Mrs. Fielding into her coupé, came hurrying forward to offer his assistance, and a few merry words passed between the party. "Good-night, gentlemen, good-night," said the deep bass of Mr. Idlewild. The young men lifted their hats, and the powerful, prancing horses bore away their lovely burden.

II.

THE young men lit their cigarettes, and sauntered slowly along the pavement. The night was cool and tranquil. The moon had set, but the heavens were brilliant with the frosty glitter which the stars emit in the clear atmosphere of winter. Much of the roar and bustle of the neighborhood had subsided ; yet the reverberations of Broadway, dulled by distance, still fell upon the ear like the ceaseless rush of a river heard by one who wakes at night amid the deathly stillness of the woods. The ferrules of their canes struck the sidewalk with the sharp, distinct ring that betokens quiet surroundings.

Their homes lay at some little distance up-town, and they walked and smoked, lost in their own reflections. How susceptible we mortals are to the influences of the natural forces ! Our nervous systems respond to the waves of light and sound, to shadow and to lustre, to silence and to turmoil, even as the chords of a piano to pressure upon the keys. Who shall escape his moods ? We vary from hour to hour. A kiss, a crowd, a peaceful night, an apple-blossom, the pale cold face of one

beloved, — what a widely opposite effect each one of these has upon the organism! And what, indeed, is human nature but a series of varied and recurring emotions, strung like pearls upon the thread of individual existence, which is bounded by mystery at either end?

Arthur Remington and Woodbury Stoughton had alike reached one of those halting-places in the struggle for existence, where even the most impetuous and least self-questioning natures have the desire and opportunity to pause and think. The precious boon of pondering on what has been and is to be, out of the sweep of the current, was theirs for a moment. This had been more literally true of their condition three months previous, at which time they had returned to New York to settle down to the serious business of life, as it is called. The eight preceding years had been passed away from their native city. They both had been graduated at Harvard, and subsequently had studied law and spent a year in travelling abroad. Now they had come back to earn their living, after having enjoyed the best advantages our civilization affords in the way of education. The social position of both was likewise of the best. They belonged to families that had for several generations been people of consideration in society. But although this was the case, each had his way to make in the world. Beyond some five thousand dollars apiece, they had nothing of their own. Their fathers, as is generally the case in America,

had made every effort to give them an excellent education, and now expected them to take care of themselves as soon as possible. The fathers were neither of them men of large fortune, and had need of all their income to provide for the expenses of a handsome establishment and growing family. The young men still lived at home. They had just been admitted to the bar, and had set up law offices of their own.

Woodbury Stoughton habitually produced the effect of an indifferent and rather lazy person, with a dash of the cynic. His conversation and bearing were apt to suggest one to whom enthusiasm or serious endeavor was at least distasteful, if not a theme for satire. It had been seemingly his desire while in college to figure as a sceptic of all that was intangible and otherwise than mundane. Watching him stroll along the streets of Cambridge, with an air both fastidious and reserved, a bull-pup at his heels, his fellows tacitly pigeon-holed him as an embryo Chesterfield. For, despite his apathetic ways, there were curious whispers in circulation concerning him. His intimates declared that he was immensely clever. It was said he had read everything. Besides, he was a handsome fellow, of commanding presence, and even those who resented his exclusive demeanor could not deny his ability to converse fluently and with pungency. Several years of schooling abroad as a child had given him a familiarity with foreign languages that served as an additional means of prestige. It came, in short,

to be currently stated that, if Woodbury Stoughton only chose to work, he could have any place on the rank-list,—a measure of praise much more flattering in the eyes of his classmates than actual success would have been. He apparently, however, studied but little the college requirements, preferring—as those who voiced his utterances said—to read in self-chosen directions. He professed to be especially enamored of literature which presented most vividly the philosophy of an epigrammatic pessimism. Aphorisms from Voltaire, La Rochefoucauld, and others of that class, were constantly on his lips.

The young ladies of the university town, who—with the example of the Trojan Helen constantly in mind, so to speak—were invariably suspicious of Parisian manners, did not approve of Mr. Stoughton. To begin with, he seemed to prefer the parties in the adjacent Boston to their own “sociables,” which was an excellent reason for suspecting him of an inclination toward worldliness; and when it was whispered about that he was acquainted with several actresses, the Puritan maidens took refuge in the dreadful anathema that there “was nothing in him.” They even took Arthur Remington, who was a favorite in Cambridge social circles, to task for his intimacy with the handsome Lothario. Miss Bolles, who was rightly supposed to possess great influence with the former, was deputed to inquire what there was to recommend Mr. Stoughton.

"Is n't he dreadfully fast?" asked the suburban beauty, with a severe look in her serious face.

"Not in the least. Why, how could you have got such an idea?" answered Remington. "He's fond of having a good time, like the rest of us, but that's all. No; Woodbury Stoughton is one of the ablest men in the class."

"Didn't he stand very low on the rank-list last year?"

"That's no test. He could have had *any* rank if he had chosen to study."

Miss Bolles, far from convinced, shook her head. To have the opportunity of improving one's self and not to do so, seemed to her earnest spirit quite incomprehensible. How many young men there were through the country struggling to obtain the means for a college education, and here was a man — and with natural ability, too — throwing away his advantages! It was simply dreadful, and Mr. Remington was to blame in seeking to defend him.

Nevertheless, the same young ladies regarded this black sheep with a certain awe that was not perhaps void of secret admiration. They could not help admitting that he was handsome. When they met him in the streets they bowed with frigidity, to be sure; but there was an excitement about the encounter for which they could not exactly account, and which the more analytical were conscious was not consistent with the disapproval they harbored. As time went on, indeed, a Miss

Margaret Lamb, one of the sweetest and most simple-minded of the set, allowed herself to become intimate with Stoughton, who had made an exception in her favor in his criticism of Cambridge manners. She presently gave it to be known that she had no idea there was so much *in* Mr. Stoughton, and that he was really very much in earnest, and *so* clever. Some of her companions, as a consequence, modified a little their views in his regard; but the majority preferred to think that Margaret had fallen a victim to her own vanity.

Remington, on the other hand, had been looked upon in his college days as a tolerably easy-going fellow, with amiable, unpretentious manners. There was a nervous energy about him always seeking vent, which had made him conspicuous in various fields of college enterprise. His exertions in the line of athletics, theatricals, and the like, were a contrast to the elegant inactivity of Stoughton, who used to smile withal at the other's restlessness. He enjoyed life with a keenness that was visible in his expression. In the way of studies he, too, had been negligent, but from a buoyant heedlessness rather than premeditation. It was always his intention to work, and his penitence for his idleness was as sincere as it was apt to prove transitory. But, though impetuous and volatile, there had ever been a current of earnest seriousness beneath the bubbling surface of his days. There were those among his classmates who styled him visionary, and instanced in support thereof his rhapsodizing talk at times,

and the tendency he showed for the discussion of serious and sentimental problems with his girl intimates. His devotion to Miss Bolles was a well-known circumstance, and some of his associates, be it said to their shame, looked upon the pale, slim professor's daughter, whose face reflected the fervor of her earnest views of life, in the light of an infliction. In fact, before the close of his undergraduate course, the influences of sobering reflection had begun to manifest themselves in his conduct, and he became much more assiduous at his studies. Commencement-Day found him above the middle of his class on the rank-list ; but, to the surprise of almost everybody, Woodbury Stoughton's percentage for the Senior year was but two or three removed from the highest.

Remington was one of the few to whom Stoughton's sudden prowess was no revelation. He was quite aware of the fire that burned beneath his friend's calm and indifferent exterior, — a fire which Stoughton had ever shrunk from acknowledging, but which was just as real as the restless energy which showed itself in the other's very eyes. Their intimacy had been a singular one. The dissimilarity of their traits had seemingly attracted them toward each other. The calm, passive force of Stoughton, his deliberate ways, suggestive of reserve power, and his casuistic cleverness had alike appealed to his more plastic companion ; and the former had in turn silently watched, with a curious interest, the development of Remington's nervous nature. They

were known as great cronies ; but their bond of sympathy largely consisted in antagonism to each other's ideas. Stoughton had not been able to disguise from his friend the secret ambition within him ; but even in confidential moments his attitude was apologetic, as if he considered all enthusiasm a weakness. While unable to conceal his own susceptibility to the aspirations common to the sober moments of youth, he inveighed against the same as stumbling-blocks in the path of happiness.

Many were the rambles they used to take together on Sunday afternoons, when their classmates who lived in Boston had gone home. They were wont to discuss all sorts of questions, and with great heat, too ; for Stoughton was a bitter opponent of authority, and resented the old-time arguments upon which his comrade founded his conclusions. And Remington, while he deplored the upsetting of the opinions he fancied established forever, could not help admitting that the other was very clever, and that, perhaps, what he said regarding the automatism of human beings might have some truth in it. For Woodbury Stoughton professed great admiration for the doctrines of the materialists, and delighted to style himself a victim of the idiosyncrasies of his ancestors. He used to quote the Frenchman's remark that "to reform a man you must begin with his grandmother," and claimed the laws of heredity to be the arbiters of fate. Opinions ? Beliefs ? Who dared claim (so he argued) that any one set of opinions or beliefs

bore the stamp of a supernatural approval? Who was prepared to assert that what men symbolized as divine commands was aught but accumulated human experience of what had been best for the race,—handed down through the centuries from father to son, until it had crystallized as an instinct of the organism and been accredited to a God? Best,—and what was best? The eternal strife went on, and on, and on. Still, the stronger survived and the weaker perished. To earn their bread, a pitiful mass of beings toiled, day in, day out, in reeking factories and workshops, and in the bowels of the earth, that their more prosperous brethren might live in luxury. Here, too, the teachings of one were stamped with the disapproval of his neighbor. What some called right there were others to stigmatize as wrong. The laws of human device varied with succeeding generations, and those of nature ever found a new interpretation. Still, a portion claimed as of divine revelation doctrines to which the rest refused their faith, and the creeds of the world were as diverse as its peoples. And so from age to age man labored his allotted time, died, and was gathered to his fathers; and what came after, no one, not even the wisest, knew.

Those delightful four years of undergraduate life came to an end at last. Class-Day was at hand, and after that they were both to enter the law school. Remington was chosen one of the marshals of his class, an office which is commonly the

reward of popularity ; and his spirits were of the best as he stood under the flower-belted memorial elm, conducting what is familiarly known to Harvard men as "the exercises at the tree." During these rites, which are witnessed annually by enthusiastic audiences of maidens in muslin and their chaperons, ranged on benches around two sides of a quadrangle, or looking down from the dormitory window-seats overhead, the graduating class, having exchanged the spick-and-span apparel of the morning for highly nondescript garments, commit every kind of student eccentricity. They cheer the favorite professors, the victorious "crews" and "nines," and even extend their patronage to the college "goodies," which is the still more aged title of the venerable dames who have the charge of rooms. When at last subjects for applause are no longer to be found, the heroes of the occasion, hand clasped in hand, begin to revolve about the ancient tree, which wears a vast band of choice flowers around its trunk, far removed from the grasp of the tallest of the revellers. The younger classes also rise from the turf upon which they have been lounging, and form three other rings, which begin to revolve with alternate motion. The Sophomores follow the movement of the graduating class, but the Juniors and Freshmen turn from right to left. The class song is sung, and after it "Fair Harvard," the darling air of the university ; and then, as the tripping feet speed faster, the voices take up the burden of "Auld Lang Syne," and lift it to the stars. The

pace grows frantic now ; the arms swing with wild, ecstatic energy ; and at a given signal the two hundred youths, who are supposed to be men from this day forth, rush in an indiscriminate mass toward the elm to tear the flowers from their resting-place. Regardless of appearances, or even of justice, they swarm up the mammoth trunk on the backs of each other. The giant lifts the nimble stripling upon his shoulders until his fingers touch the posies, and robs him to the last bud as he hauls him down. It is *sauve qui peut* with a vengeance. The weakest go to the wall, or rather to the earth, and the strong man carries off the prize to his Dulcinea. It is a mimic foretaste of the great world into which they will be let loose upon the morrow.

So at least had reflected Woodbury Stoughton, as he stood a little apart watching the scrimmage with a smile that was half disdainful. He was too lazy, as he would have expressed it, to make so much exertion for the sake of a few roses. There was nobody in especial to whom he wished to present them, and he would get heated for nothing. Therefore he let the others do the climbing, and amused himself with the sight of their vicissitudes. He would have to encounter plenty of rough-and-tumble in the struggle of the next few years without beginning now. Holloa ! there was Arthur Remington barking up the tree, like a good one. Smithson, the university stroke, had him by the legs, and was lifting him toward the goal. A little farther, — there, he had a handful now, and looked

with beaming, mocking eyes triumphantly down at the envious faces below. "This way, that's a good fellow, Remington," "Remember your friends," "Pull him down," and the like, rose from a score of throats, until attention was diverted by the success of another aspirant who had clambered to eminence under cover of the confusion. Just then, Remington, who was casting favors right and left, caught sight of Stoughton looking up at him, and with a simple wave of his arm tossed in his direction a choice bunch of red roses which he had intended to reserve for himself. A dozen hands grasped at them as they floated downward, but Stoughton was not the man to suffer himself to be robbed under his very eyes. He strove valiantly for his property, and succeeded in carrying off the major portion of the blushing blossoms. While he was battling, the patience of the stalwart Smithson apparently gave way, and with it the support of Remington, who came tumbling to the earth, clinching, however, with the tenacity of desperation a few crumpled remains of flowers. The tree was entirely stripped now. In fact, the work of demolition had been vastly shorter than has been its narration, and the crowd, well pleased at the success of the spectacle, already was beginning to scatter in the direction of the "teas."

A spur in the side of Remington's native energy had been the desire to obtain from the rose-belt a *bouquet de corsage* for Miss Bolles, to whom he had promised to show later on in the evening, when

the band began to play and the college-green was alive with lanterns, the room that he had occupied during the four years of his student life. It was a sorry-looking bunch that he had carried off, so he reflected, as he presented them to the young lady, with a stammering, half-audible remark, embodying the hope that she would keep them to remember him by. Nor did they look much better, as he scanned them by and by, from a seat beside his study-table, nestling in her waistband. Miss Bolles had possession of the cushioned window-seat, and her slim, girlish profile, surmounted by a jaunty chip hat and large white feather, were outlined as in a frame against the evening air. She held between her thumb and finger the cord of the shade, and gently and pensively swayed the tassel to and fro, while the strains of music and hum of voices floated up from below.

He had been too generous at the tree. He ought to have kept the best for her instead of giving them away. He had been in a position to win for her the choicest of all, and yet there was nothing to show for his endeavors but these faded sprigs. What had Woodbury done with his? he wondered. He had seen Miss Lamb wandering about at Jack Hewson's tea looking quite disconsolate, despite the attendance of a cavalier or two. Very likely Woodbury had found her by this time.

What was he doing here himself? Why had he persuaded Miss Bolles to climb the winding, narrow staircase to his nest in the top story of old

Holworthy? He had been looking forward for weeks to this interview, and now it had come. Neither of them had spoken for several minutes. She was listening to the music. How pretty she looked, he thought, as he stealthily gazed at her. His heart was beating like a trip-hammer. Ought he to say anything to her? Would she like it if he did? Did he want to say anything to her, and what was there to say? He loved her—yes, he loved her; but somehow he was n't ready to be married yet. What would his family say? He had his own way to make in the world. He was ready to work, he was eager to work. He would go out on a sheep-farm or do anything to make money, if only he was sure she cared for him. Yes, come what might, he would tell her his secret,—if it was a secret,—and have it over with. He never could be happy without her, he was sure of that.

So he had presently broken the silence, which was becoming somewhat awkward, with a sententious little speech that was so suggestive of sentiment as to cause Miss Bolles to draw her wrap about her shoulders with a slight shiver and say she thought it really was time for her to be going. But the young lover would pay no attention to the hint. She should not escape him now. He never might have such an opportunity again. And he rushed to his fate very glibly when once the ice was broken, for he told the sweet descendant of the Puritans he had loved her ever since he had seen

her first, that she was the dearest girl in the world, and had so much influence over him that if she would only say she loved him just a little, he would be very, very happy. He called her "Maud," too, and, drawing his chair to the window-seat, tried to take her hand, which she, poor girl, would not let him have. She sat silent and trembling, nor did she say a word until he had finished. Then she told him quietly, and even a little coldly, that what he asked was quite impossible. She had enjoyed their friendship very much, of course; but the idea of anything else had never entered her head.

"I am *so* sorry for you, Mr. Remington, but you must try and get on without me. I am not half so good a girl as you make me out to be," and she smiled faintly at her admirer. "I only wish I were," she added, and she covered her face with her hands as she spoke.

Half an hour later, after he had conducted Miss Bolles back to her party and bade her a rather stiff and funereal farewell, Remington took a bee-line for one of the clubs. He felt angry, and, as if it were incumbent upon him to do something desperate in retaliation for his discomfiture, he would get drunk. He remembered that Harry Loring had, according to popular report, gone on a prolonged spree of ten days after being thrown over by a certain Miss Bowdoin, and he could now sympathize acutely with his action. The lights in the yard were dying out rapidly, and most of the guests had gone home. The songs of students who had

exchanged feminine society for mild bacchanalia were beginning to be audible in the distance, and the greensward was fast assuming the appearance of a deserted battle-field.

As Remington was hurried on by the impetuosity of this mood, he was startled at hearing a voice close at hand ask him whither he was going so fast. Turning his head sharply, he found himself face to face with Woodbury Stoughton, who was sitting placidly smoking a pipe on the fence which bordered the sidewalk. The shade of a large tree concealed his figure from the careless passer.

"Holloa, Wood," exclaimed Remington, and he came to a halt. "What in the world are you doing here?"

"Reflecting, my dear fellow. Nothing worse, I assure you. I've been here most of the evening." He smoked in silence for a minute. "You see, I was afraid if I went into the yard I might be led into saying something foolish. The last thing my mother said to me before I left home at Christmas was, that I must be careful not to do anything foolish. I've been following her advice; that's all."

Remington nervously switched off the head of an innocent dandelion with his cane. "I've been making a fool of myself to-night," he said.

"I think very likely," said Stoughton. "Did she accept you?" he inquired, presently.

"No."

"Well, you've got off better than I feared. If

any one would have guaranteed me the same result, I might have had a pleasant evening ; but I did n't dare to risk it." As he spoke, Stoughton looked down half-regretfully at a bunch of withered roses which adorned his lapel. Remington recognized them as the same he had thrown to him from the tree.

" I saw Miss Lamb at Jack Hewson's tea," said Remington.

" She's a nice girl, — a very nice girl." Stoughton shook his head slowly from side to side, and took another puff. " I 'd told her that already though, so there was no use in my repeating it to her to-night. It was all I meant to tell her." He spoke the last words with a quiet deliberation. Presently he gave a deep sigh, and, rising, knocked the ashes out of his pipe against the fence. "' To-morrow, to fresh woods and pastures new.' Come on, old fellow. It's the luckiest thing in the world she refused you ; and you 'll think so, too, before you 're a week older."

This prediction did not turn out to be exactly true ; for, despite a consciousness that there was a certain compensation in still being free, and not having to go out to a sheep-farm immediately, Remington felt very gloomy for a number of weeks. Stoughton rallied him upon his despondency, and adduced many excellent reasons why he should be thankful that Miss Bolles had given him the mitten. They passed most of the summer, after graduation, at Newport ; and it must be confessed that, when

the time came for them to enter the law school, Remington did not experience any special elation at the idea of meeting his would-be sweetheart once more. Indeed, he had come to see that there were many things to be considered in the matter; that is to say, his youth, lack of means, and unsettled prospects in life did not warrant him in contracting an engagement. It was better as it was, perhaps. If he continued to love Miss Bolles three years hence, when he had begun to practise law, he would try his fortune again. Until then he must be content to take his chance; and it was a little surprising to himself, withal, to observe how calmly he was able to face the prospect of taking his chance.

Those next two years at the law school were years of genuine hard study on the part of both Remington and Stoughton. It is very apt to be the case that those who have been easy-going students while undergraduates turn out wonderful workers as soon as they enter the professional schools. They each managed to spend so many hours a day over their law-books that the termination of the course found them thoroughly fagged out, and a year abroad was decreed as the needful tonic in the premises. Miss Bolles must have been a most unsophisticated young person, for Remington left Cambridge this second time with scarcely a pang at parting. Indeed, it is doubtful if there was any formal leave-taking between them. He had found her manner toward him, on his return from Newport, so cool (which was doubtless caused

by a conscientious wish to avoid encouragement) that he soon began to plead the multiplicity of his legal duties as an excuse for not making more frequent visits. He scarcely ever went to the Cambridge sociables, and their opportunities for meeting were very few. Miss Margaret Lamb was in poor health during the greater portion of the two years, and Stoughton used to send her fruit and flowers occasionally. She was said to have played too much tennis at Bar Harbor; but, as her father, Professor George Lamb, happened to have been one of the original holders of Agueville and Tallpeak Railway stock, she was able to have the best medical attendance.

"Only think," said Stoughton, the evening after their final law examinations, as he and his friend sat on the steps of Dane Hall, taking a last retrospective survey — "Only think, if I'd married Margaret Lamb, what a bonanza I should have struck! Somebody was saying yesterday that the professor is worth a cool million."

"And she's an only daughter," added Remington.

Thus had passed the days of their novitiate. A three months' experience of actual life had already begun to color the current of their ideas. Just as buds, which, fashioned through long months of dark, silent growth, burst into light and prominence beneath a spring day's varying sun and shower, impulses and impressions hitherto unknown to them were welling up under contact with the workaday world. They were passing through

the disillusionizing process common to all carefully educated young men. The realities of life were very different from what they had pictured them at the university. They had come to New York with the knowledge of their superiority to the mass of mankind, and confident of recognition. They were anxious to shine in their calling, to make money, to become prominent in the community; and though indefinite as to the precise methods, they had never doubted their ability to do so. But the result thus far had been quite removed from their expectation. They had found their theories and refinements of little apparent avail for the wear and tear of down-town life.

The discovery had been more or less mortifying. Stoughton, reserved, dignified, almost phlegmatic in his apparent indifference, yet eager at heart; Remington, nervous, impetuous, scarcely less clever,—they alike felt a certain chagrin at the realization of their (so to speak) helplessness among their fellows. The very qualities that distinguished them from the multitude seemed to unfit them for competition, to bar them from success.

Upon the mind of each the effect had been peculiar. To Remington, the most serious shock had been a keener appreciation of the force of materialism, a rude revolutionizing of his emotional side; but the feeling aroused in Stoughton was distinctly one of thwarted ambition and wounded vanity. Accustomed hitherto, almost without ex-

ertion, to be easily first, he had looked forward — vaguely, perhaps, yet confidently — to a conspicuous recognition. He had supposed the accomplished ability of which he knew himself to be possessed would be a free pass to advancement ; instead of which he saw himself outstripped by men of Finchley's stripe, — men whom he sneered at, but whom he now secretly envied.

Such reflections were a part of their thoughts this evening, as they pursued their way in company up Fifth Avenue. Stoughton's home was the nearer, and they stood for a moment chatting at the corner where it was necessary for him to branch off. To-morrow was Sunday. For the coming week they found themselves deep in engagements.

"There's no rest for the weary in this life," said Remington, with a sigh. "However, we can sleep late to-morrow ; that's one comfort. By Jove, it's a fine night !" Carelessly swinging his cane, he gazed up at the clear heavens.

"Right you are," answered Stoughton, absently. "It's a strange world, Arthur," he continued, suddenly pulling himself together. "Well, as the bard says,

'If you can't get in by the golden gate,
Climb over the garden wall.'

Good-night !"

"Good-night !" And the young men parted.

III.

IT was usual with Remington and Stoughton to remain down-town until late in the afternoon, returning just in time to get ready for dinner. They were apt to walk the distance, so as to obtain a little fresh air and exercise. Sometimes they took the "Elevated," and tried to make a few calls at the afternoon tea-hour. The gay season had begun, and invitations to all sorts of entertainments were pouring in upon them. Their social position gave them the *entrée* to the most agreeable houses in town.

One afternoon, shortly after the episode at Delmonico's, Stoughton carried his friend to call on Mrs. Fielding. She lived on Fifth Avenue in the vicinity of Sixtieth Street. The irreproachable manservant who answered the bell had reached a period of life equally removed from the rawness of youth and the seediness of age. With a demeanor subdued, and not too unctuous to be consistent with a proper self-respect, he aided them to take off their overcoats in a large hall, exquisitely furnished in the spirit of the modern school of high art.

"What name shall I say, sir?"

"Mr. Remington, please."

"Thank you, sir." The servant drew aside the portière which hung across the doorway of the adjoining room: "Mr. Woodbury Stoughton — Mr. Remington."

Remington found himself in a spacious parlor, dim with faint daylight, strained through colored shades, and the afterglow of a wood fire. A maze of low tables, footstools, and other tasteful-looking knick-knacks separated the young men from their hostess, whose sofa was beside the distant hearth. She laid aside the volume which lay open on her lap and rose to greet them with a cordial smile.

She was dressed simply, in a loose-fitting costume of some cashmere material of a neutral, greenish-brown tint. A single pale pink rose, with a dash of deeper color at the tips of its leaves, lay on her bosom. Remington noticed the same excessively refined delicacy of feature that had struck him the evening he had seen her at Delmonico's; but, in this dimmer light, no suggestion of meagreness marred the fascination of her pretty face. The apartment was in harmony with its mistress, a soothing pleasure to the eye that appreciates true elegance and grace. That perfection of effect, of which the heightening charm is an apparent absence of art, was there completely realized.

"You see, Mrs. Fielding," said Stoughton, "I have taken an early advantage of your permission to bring my friend Mr. Remington to visit you."

"You are very good; Mr. Remington is welcome both on your account and on his own," she said in

a sweet, low voice, and with a manner slightly languid, but completely gracious. "I know your mother and sisters very well, Mr. Remington," she continued, as she gave the young man her thin white hand. "Your mother is well, I hope?"

"Yes; she and my sister Mabel are in Boston for a few days." Despite her unaffected simplicity Remington blushed, with a sense of that discrepancy which exists between Sèvres china and common ware.

"Ah, how charming! Pray sit down, Mr. Remington." She re-established herself on the lounge, and touched a little bell on the table beside her, which emitted a musical sound. The decorous man-servant appeared.

"The tea, Dawson."

Mrs. Fielding leaned back against the cushions. "You have come back to New York to stay, I hope, Mr. Remington."

"Yes, I believe so, Mrs. Fielding."

"I tell Mr. Remington," said Stoughton, "that if he desires to be a success, he must write himself down in Mrs. Fielding's good graces."

"I am sure Mr. Remington needs no assistance from any one to win his way," she said, with a pleasant smile; "I can see he is clever."

Remington laughed confusedly. "Oh, I assure you that is quite a mistake," he murmured. Then, with an attempt at effusiveness which sounded a little elaborate: "I shall try to convince Mrs. Fielding of my desire for her favorable opinion."

The tea-things, a dainty Wedgwood service of quaint design, were brought in by Dawson and placed on the low plush-covered table at her elbow. She proceeded to make the tea while Stoughton told a bit or two of society news in his amusing vein.

"I saw you the other evening at Delmonico's, I think, Mr. Remington," said Mrs. Fielding, presently. "That Miss Idlewild is a lovely-looking girl. Do you know her well?"

"Only slightly."

Stoughton gave an amused laugh. "You must not question him too closely there, Mrs. Fielding. I suspect Mr. Remington of being a gay deceiver."

"Indeed," she murmured softly. She was pouring out tea into one of the quaint little cups, and, as she spoke, raised her eyes therefrom and let them fall inquiringly on Remington. "Are you, too, of the faithless kind?" she asked, with a sigh of simulated despair.

"Oh, I trust not," he answered, with a nervous laugh; and as her glance encountered his, he blushed.

"Perhaps Mr. Remington will make a confidante of me some day when he comes to see me alone. I can keep a secret. Do you take tea, Mr. Remington?" she asked, with her head poised on one side, and another sly, blithe glance at the young man.

Remington disliked tea. "If you please," he answered.

"One lump, or two?" and she gracefully balanced the second bit of sugar in a liliputian pair

of tongs above the smoking beverage. "But stay ; I will leave it in the saucer, and you shall choose for yourself," she added airily, before Remington could reply.

As he rose to receive his cup from her hand the portière was drawn aside, and the voice of Dawson announced "Miss Tremaine—Miss Lawton—Miss Crosby."

"How sweet of you, my dears !" Mrs. Fielding embraced all of the trio, who, kept in countenance by the superiority of their numbers, all chattered effusively at the same moment. They were young girls, dressed tastefully and in the height of fashion.

Miss Tremaine was a tall, gaunt girl, with large bones and a long neck, which gave her something of a giraffe-like demeanor. She was eminently vivacious, and began at once to relate in a chattering but spirited tone the latest social intelligence. "Oh, Ethel," she cried, turning toward Mrs. Fielding, "have you heard that the Guards have been ordered to the war in the Transvaal? Is n't it quite too distressing for poor dear Lady Poppleton? You know 'Beauty' will have to go. You remember 'Beauty,' of course?"

"What, the little one with the straw whiskers?"

"No, dear, that was 'Adonis.' 'Beauty' is the clever one with the large eyes, who stopped, when he was out here, at the Dudley Robinsons'."

Remington found himself beside Miss Lawton, a young lady in the vicinity of twenty-three, who possessed a pretty, round, florid face, with its tra-

ditional accompaniments of blue eyes and flaxen hair, but was short and dumpy. They had already met at a ball or two. Unlike Miss Tremaine, the still hunt was her method, and for some minutes she was very undemonstrative ; but when the ice was once broken, her chirpy prattle had the easy flow of a brook in early summer.

"Were n't you at Bar Harbor last summer, Mr. Remington?"

"Yes, for a short time."

"I thought I saw you there. I stayed eight weeks, and was dreadfully sorry to come home. It was my fifth season there. Is n't it a fascinating place? I do think it's the nicest place to go to in the summer I know of. Some people call it rowdy ; I don't ; do you, Mr. Remington? Mamma is always complaining about my being such a gad down there, as she calls it ; but I can't see the harm of seeing people naturally, can you? I make up for it by being frightfully proper in town. That reminds me, parties are beginning early this year. I suppose you will go about a great deal this winter, Mr. Remington. Mrs. David Kochlin's cards are out for a large *musical*, and the George Butts — this was told me in strict confidence, so you must not say I told you — are to give a ball soon. Their daughter Pauline is a *débutante*. And then the Idlewilds. Do you know the Idlewilds, Mr. Remington?"

"A little."

"Oh, really! I don't know them, but they've

sent me an invitation. I think I shall go. I hear the house is perfectly fascinating. Mamma doesn't approve much of my going, but it will be such fun. Mr. Stoughton is a great friend of yours, isn't he? I think he's so nice! He's a lawyer, I hear. I should think the law would be frightfully stupid. Oh, but how dreadful of me! Perhaps you're a lawyer, Mr. Remington!" She stopped short with a little gasp, and then, in response to Remington's amused nod, — "What, really? Well, you'll forgive me, won't you, Mr. Remington?"

"What is that, Florence, I hear about forgiving?" exclaimed Mrs. Fielding, turning toward them. "You are getting on quite too fast. I can't have you monopolizing Mr. Remington altogether. You must beware of Miss Lawton, Mr. Remington; she is dangerous."

"I have discovered that already," said the young man, with a significant smile.

"Ah, now," cried Miss Lawton, in her demure way, "how unkind! And all, Ethel, because I did not happen to know that he's a lawyer."

"I have no doubt it was all your fault, dear. But you have n't drunk your tea, Mr. Remington. It is quite cold. I am going to give you another cup. Yes, I insist; and you shall sit over here where Miss Lawton cannot engross your attention."

As Remington crossed over to the vacant place on Mrs. Fielding's lounge, his glance fell upon Miss Crosby, who was listening intently to something Stoughton was saying. Remington had been

introduced to her a few evenings before, and although he had exchanged but a few words with her, the agreeable impression thereof had lingered with him a little. She was a cousin of Mrs. Fielding, and had much of her physique. The refined delicacy of her features was animated by the wistful interest of budding womanhood. One became aware at first that she had sympathetic brown eyes and a quiet manner.

"Tell me," said Mrs. Fielding, interrupting his momentary reverie with a beseeching little air as of a desire for confidence, "how do you think you are going to like New York?"

A few minutes later Remington found himself talking to his fair hostess with a freedom that was delightful, and yet surprising to himself withal. The peculiar air of sympathy with which she listened to what he had to say drew from him, almost unwittingly, a frank exposure of his ideas. It was easy to be unreserved, for she seemed so quick to catch his meaning, so appreciative of mere suggestions of thought. She was, besides, graceful and pleasing. Her air expressed the perfection of natural elegance. She must be very clever, — and yet how young-looking she was. Her years could be scarcely greater in number than his own. But women mature so much faster than men. He was a mere boy beside her.

He spoke of his travels, of the chitchat of the day, and of the defects of the reigning prima donna. Then, as he felt himself understood, he dwelt a

little on his impressions of the great city. Money was the ruling spirit of the age, and the seeming dearth of lofty ambitions a depressing evil.

"I am so glad to hear you talk so," she murmured. "It is refreshing to meet a man who cares for something beyond dollars and cents." She sighed gently. "And so you are a lawyer, Mr. Remington?"

"Yes, I have decided on the law as a profession."

"How interesting!" and she gently knocked together in her clasped hands a pair of silver bracelets which she had untwisted from her arms.

"Scarcely interesting, I fear," replied Remington, with a little laugh, which betrayed, however, that he was pleased. "Your sex is wont to apply that adjective less indulgently."

"Ah, but I cannot agree with you. It must be grand to be a lawyer and have important cases—or causes, you see I am ignorant of the precise term—to defend." She leaned back against the cushions, and looked at him earnestly from under her penthouse lids.

Remington blushed and his eyes fell. He nervously indented, with the point of his cane, one of the flowers which patterned the carpet. "Perhaps—when you have them to defend. I am only a beginner."

"Yes, but everything has a beginning," she murmured in low, sweet tones.

"True." There was a pause, as if each were

wrapt in thought. Remington reached out his hand and took from the plush table the volume she had been reading. "Permit me," he said. "Ah, Swinburne!" and he opened the book and began to turn over the pages.

"Do you know him, Mr. Remington?"

"A little." His eyes caught a passage which he paused to dwell upon.

"What is it, Mr. Remington?" and she bent over so that she might share the page with the young man. "'Before Dawn.' That is one of my favorites. Is it not lovely?"

They were silent for a moment. It was the last stanza of the poem which had attracted Remington's attention, and, as he came to it again in conclusion, he nodded his head in acquiescence with her enthusiasm. Mrs. Fielding repeated in soft murmur the lines that had struck his fancy:—

"So hath it been, so be it;
For who shall live and flee it?
But look that no man see it
Or hear it unaware:
Lest all who love and choose him
See love and so refuse him,
For all who find him lose him;
But all have found him fair."

"Adorable, are they not?" she continued. "There is a wealth of deliciousness in Swinburne." And her pupils, dilated with their sense of enjoyment, sought his own.

"Exquisite," he replied; but, although the effect of the words just read was vastly soothing, he was

not greatly concerned with their meaning. Without knowing exactly why, he was conscious of a vague delight he had no desire to analyze,—perhaps lest he might arouse that bugbear of a moral censor. The atmosphere of this refined, charming woman had the effect upon him as of violets on the sense of smell, or smooth rich cream upon the palate. What Stoughton had said regarding her previous attachment occurred to him. She had been married about a year ago, and had recently returned home from abroad. What was her purpose, her object in life now? he wondered. What were her feelings, her thoughts, her ideas?

"You are fond of reading—of books?" he inquired, gently.

"Yes,—that is, of real books, Mr. Remington. I sometimes think," she went on to say, "we have no literature in this country. The characters in our novels and poems are wanting in color and spontaneity. They are cardboard men and women, rather than flesh and blood. We lack passion as a nation,—does it not strike you so, Mr. Remington? We are artificial and cold. We are forever repressing ourselves." She gave a little shiver, and the curve of her lips wore for an instant the shadow of something half-bitter, half-weary.

"Yes," he answered; but before he could proceed, he became aware that the others had risen and were shaking hands with Mrs. Fielding. He stood up mechanically.

"I'm afraid you think I'm very dreadful, Mr.

Remington," piped Miss Lawton wistfully, as she tripped past him. He found himself beside Miss Crosby.

"I know one of your sisters, Mr. Remington," she said softly. "We were at school together. Have you returned to New York for good?"

"For better or for worse, Miss Crosby," answered Remington, with a smile; "or rather, I should say, for richer or for poorer."

"Yes?" She pronounced the word with a little laugh and a sweet sibilation of the final consonant. There was an eloquent earnestness about her expression as she gazed at him that made Remington almost regret his flippancy.

It was a look Dorothy Crosby's face was apt to assume at such times as her imagination was appealed to, especially during conversations with the other sex, or when in the presence of fine scenery or listening to music. If her nervous system was powerfully affected, as often happened where beautiful music was concerned, the expression in question savored of a pleasure that was almost pain. Her large luminous brown eyes, looking out from a physiognomy noticeably delicate and refined, heightened the natural effect of this peculiarity, which had already caused her to be described in society as "interesting." She generally carried her head a little on one side at such moments. Young men sometimes made the mistake of ascribing this intensity of expression to the effect of their identities instead of to the interest of her own reflections.

She was a *débutante*. She lived alone with her mother, who was a widow. Her sister, Mrs. Charles Maclane, a beauty of the grand, dashing type, whose regular features were for several seasons a source of heart-ache to youthful admirers of classical loveliness, had made a brilliant match, it was considered, in dowering with her charms the hearth of a young millionaire. Marian Crosby, as her name was prior to that step, had, to be a little metaphorical, made a triumphal march to the altar over a route strewn with bleeding hearts. In short, she had been widely admired and had flirted desperately. The world said she came well by this behavior, for her mother — whom no one, to judge from the demure repose of that good lady's maturity, would have ventured to suspect of early diablerie — had been just such another when she was a girl in Baltimore. The latter, however, unlike her elder daughter, had wedded a poor man. Mr. Crosby's fascinations had carried her maiden heart by storm, and she had followed the young lawyer to his simple home in New York. He was nevertheless, though comparatively penniless, an aristocrat by birth; and to his charming ways were added the more substantial advantage of good parts and a scholarly ambition. Had his health been able to withstand the strain of a rigorous devotion to his profession, distinction would doubtless in time have blessed their lot; but such was not to be, and shortly after Dorothy's birth Mrs. Crosby was left a widow.

Dorothy was like her father in person; and with

the paternal form she had inherited that mixture of the serious and the gay which had marked his temperament. Coupled with intelligence of expression, she possessed to a high degree the ineffable air of refinement, the modest grace and finish of bearing, that are the outcome of generations of good breeding alone, and without which the self-possessed independence and smartness supposed to be the boasted heritage of American girls are but garish virtues. Her blood and nurture rendered her proof against everything that lacked delicacy. There are dispositions which, recognizing things of unrefined or sensual purport to be hurtful, bravely put them aside and cease to regret the self-denial; but to Dorothy aught that savored of coarseness in thought or action gave absolute pain. Such things were as repugnant and foreign to her nature as soot to the surface of the lily. She had been born so, and doubtless the purity and delicacy were no more to her merit than it is creditable to you and me that we do not use our rudimentary organs or have ceased to believe in witches. She could not help being what she was. Some one before her in the ancestral line had striven to be pure and refined, and Dorothy was the result of such endeavor. And thereby hangs a philosophy. We bear fruit in our descendants, and individual effort is the secret of the progress of the world. A man's possibilities are decided in his mother's womb. Each one of us mortals has his limits, — his gamut, so to speak; and the best performer cannot strike a note to thrill the soul from a

low-priced instrument. Life is a growth, and whoever touches the stops aright will, though he play himself a feeble strain, transmit to his children the power for sweeter melody.

The strenuous voice of Miss Tremaine, urging upon Miss Crosby the necessity of immediate departure, interrupted their conversation. Remington turned to proffer his own adieus.

"I hope you will come to see me very soon, Mr. Remington." Mrs. Fielding's eyes, as they met his, seemed liquid with a mute solicitation for sympathy. Her loose, open sleeve, receding up her outstretched arm, displayed a frail, snow-white wrist.

The wished-for epigram failed to respond to his need. "I shall be very happy to, I'm sure," he replied; and he coveted the half-audacious badinage of Stoughton's farewell.

The young men walked along Fifth Avenue with the attractive trio, and Remington, as he left Miss Crosby on her threshold, obtained her promise to dance the german with him at the Idlewilds'.

IV.

PETER IDLEWILD had run away from home some fifty years ago, without a dollar in his pocket. To-day he was one of the so-called railroad kings of the country. His native place was a small Massachusetts town, from which, at the age of fourteen, he had vanished in the wake of a travelling circus. The hard knocks incident to a tumbler's career had speedily dissipated the halo of hero-worship with which his youthful imagination had surrounded such a lot. During the next few years he became severally a bareback rider, a huckster of small confectioneries, and a Lightning Ticket Agent. All these occupations, however, were but stepping-stones toward the realization of a wider ambition. The thrift and keen appreciation of the money-value of things, peculiar to rustic New England, was rife within him. By the time he was nineteen his savings permitted him to purchase a controlling interest in "The Fat Woman of Guinea," a side show connected with the circus with which he had continued to travel. Severing the lady in question from the main company, he carried her about the country as an independent

organization, with signal success. He was grown to be a strong strapping fellow, with a sonorous voice and a happy gift of plausible statement. The village folk flocked to see his abnormal prodigy, who soon, however, became the nucleus of a considerable cabinet of curiosities. Money flowed in rapidly ; but he was not a man to be dissatisfied with moderate profits. One fine day he sold out to a rival his entire live stock, not even exempting the foundress of his fortunes nor a peculiarly profitable "Tattooed Giant," and invested a portion of the proceeds in a well-stocked pedler's van.

Prospering here withal, he betook himself, at the end of another five years, to New York, to become the fountain head from which a number of these itinerants were furnished with supplies. He was active and diligent, and his business thrived in pace with its increasing proportions. He launched out into new and various fields of enterprise. Omnibus and steamboat lines, an express business, and even a hotel or two, were among the undertakings that were nursed into a lucrative existence by his clear-sighted energy. All that he touched seemed literally to turn to gold, and men began to point to him as a capitalist. But even now his long-practised caution stood him in good stead. As earlier in his career, he showed a willingness to allow others to reap what he was accustomed to call the "top-story profits." The eve of one of the most disastrous financial panics that had ever visited this country found him in a position of security. He

had "salted down" into hard cash the gains from his outlying ventures, amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars ; which, after the storm was blown over, he concentrated in the banking house of Peter Idlewild & Company, thereafter to be one of the money powers of the city. He had had the shrewdness to foresee the immense future of the railroad systems of the nation, and by bold, yet prudent investment and speculation, his large wealth doubled and trebled itself. He had become a millionaire in the actual sense of the word.

His life, as this epitome shows, had embraced a wide and varied experience. He was essentially a self-made man. His was one of those iron constitutions that defy abuse. Fatigue was almost an unknown sensation to him. He could eat anything, and at any hour, with seeming impunity, and obtain the refreshment of sleep at a moment's will. He possessed, besides, that power of adaptability which is itself one of the keys to success. Unpolished, unfamiliar with the graces of language, he had ever been able to electrify a circle by his quaint utterances, the pithiness of which was enhanced by their very dearth of grammar. His fund of stories, animated by the indescribable broad humor native to our workaday population, was inexhaustible. The smoking-car and hotel corridor, the camp fire and village, had alike known him well and accorded him a delighted audience.

We whose efforts in life have been less prosperous are prone to entertain some hero-worship

regarding one so thoroughly successful in practical fields. We like to believe that he must have been actuated by broad and elevated principles, that he must have generalized with the well-balanced rapidity of genius, and been influenced by liberal impulses. And yet, if we were to weave for Peter Idlewild such a vesture of idolatry, we should assuredly be doomed to disappointment. He had been completely a man of action, to whom theories were nought, except in so far as they could be made use of to forward his personal interests. It may be doubted whether, after the primary romance of his boyhood had been rudely dispelled through an actual experience of the hardships of the tan-ring, he had ever allowed considerations of idealism to trouble him. Thrown upon the world and forced to win his way, he had made use of human nature and adapted himself to its many-sidedness, without becoming enslaved to what he regarded as its weakness. He appreciated the motive power, and at the same time the limitations, of theories and speculative opinions, and while humoring those of others had avoided partisanship himself. He had played upon, without sharing, the feelings and convictions of humanity.

But Dame Nature is a relentless creditor. There was one spot in the heart of Peter Idlewild that had escaped these benumbing methods. He cherished for his daughter Isabel an absorbing love. Her mother, a young woman from Western New York, whose acquaintance he had made during

his peregrinations with the circus, had died shortly after confinement. The baby girl, intrusted at first to the care of his own sister, who still inhabited the New England homestead he had forsaken, had become, after she was able to run about freely, the constant companion of his wanderings. For a number of years she had shared with him this roving life; and when at last he was compelled by the requirements of education to send her back to his kinsfolk, she had yet ever lived in his thoughts and become a nucleus about which his possessions wound themselves with an ever increasing tension.

As time went on he had come, as we have seen, to settle down in New York; and it had been half for Isabel's sake that he had married again,—this time a person of middle age and a certain social position, whom her friends declared to have accepted the banker on account of his money. Rugged and indifferent to the graces of life as he was himself, Peter Idlewild had perhaps secretly made up his mind that democracy avails women little, and that their only chance for prominence lies in social prestige. Content on his own part to drive fast horses in the comparative isolation of a single boon companion, he had begun to be eager, on his daughter's behalf, for the passport to good society. He had bought a house of astounding proportions, and had it furnished by a professed art-critic on a high scale of magnificence. He was just about to give Isabel a "coming-out ball," to which he

had invited upon the most trivial pretence, in some cases in fact upon none at all, the greater portion of the fashion of the city. Nothing was good enough for his only child. She should have the best that money could bring ; and there the old millionaire at least felt safe. He could slap his pocket with the sardonic consciousness that he held strong cards. It was his wont to tell the blooming girl, in moments of endearment, that she ought to be the wife of a duke ; and who knows that in his heart, despite his plebeian tastes and instincts, he did not cherish some such future for her as an alliance with a titled foreigner ?

Isabel in turn more than reciprocated the affection of her father. He was to her an idol upon which she lavished the wealth of her nature. To go to New York some day and keep house for him had been the Mecca of her girlish fancy, to which she had looked forward with an impatience but little concealed. This had come to pass when she was sixteen ; but the sweetness of realization had been alloyed for her by the appearance on the scene of Peter Idlewild's second wife. The latter found the country girl sadly deficient in the usages of polite society, and for three years Isabel had been forced to submit to a series of refining processes at the dictation of her step-mother, which had resulted in an effectual removal of the young beauty's rougher edges.

Isabel's preceding years had been passed in a New England country town, under the tutelage

of her father's sister, Submit Idlewild, or "Aunt Mitty," as she was commonly known. The latter was a spinster, whose native strength of character had developed in the direction of rigid views on the subject of discipline. She belonged essentially to the older generation, and had clung tenaciously to the letter and spirit of the Puritan code long after most of her neighbors had ceased to struggle against the encroachments of so-called progress. The young people of the day, in especial, incited her to ominous head-shakings. Their easy-going independence and lack of reverence for age and authority were her favorite themes for homily. The linguistic and other accomplishments which were beginning to revolutionize the raw, though salutary, methods of New England education filled her with dismay. French she habitually stigmatized as a pack of nonsense, and "pianner playing" as a cloak for idleness.

But, with all this firmness of character, the sober-minded old maid had found in her niece a young person who kept her hands full. Isabel, in truth, had cost Aunt Mitty a "peck o' trouble" to manage. As regards physique and vitality she was pre-eminently her father's daughter. She possessed the same determined energy, and, as a complement thereto, a copious fund of animal spirits ready to overflow upon the slightest occasion. Naturally daring and self-reliant, the freedom of modern life had had for her a vivid attraction. Existence was to her a keen enjoyment, and she

was impatient of the restrictions imposed by her relative. She had the stronger nature of the two, and though the older woman contested every inch, victory generally remained with the splendid rebel.

A more politic or less conscientious person than Miss Submit Idlewild would have taken advantage, in these contests, of the impulsive nature of the young girl,—for the latter had, beneath the harum-scarum of her irresponsible ways, a warm heart. An appeal to her feelings was a weapon which a greater strategist would have used with signal effect. But the very exuberance of Isabel's emotional side was a source of alarm, or at least a puzzle, to the sedate spinster, in whose ideas a rapid circulation of the blood was associated with innate depravity, as it were. And so, while in secret deeply attached to her niece, she had felt it necessary to repress displays of feeling on her own part, as a check to the other's effusiveness.

The years had slipped away. This was the evening of Isabel's coming-out ball. She had already attended a number of entertainments at other houses, but to-night was to make her known to the gay world at large, or at least to such part of it as saw fit to conquer their prejudices to the extent of accepting Mr. and Mrs. Peter Idlewild's invitation. And most of them would succeed in doing this; for the house, as has been stated, was reputedly well worth a personal examination. Moreover, Mrs. Tom Fielding's answer to the surprise expressed by her

husband at her willingness to accept courtesies from such mushroom members of society, voiced the philosophy of many.

"Oh, my dear Tom," said the lady in question, "in three years everybody will visit the Idlewilds; and if one must take the plunge, it is best to do it with good grace, you know."

"Very well, dear," replied submissively her lord and master, whose objections were perhaps but a pretext to escape for once the rôle of tame bear in which he had begun to figure of late. It had already become his lot to be dragged about from house to house evening after evening. His wife adored society, as she phrased it; and he, poor fellow, adored his wife. A simile of self-invention was a novel thing to be flitting through his brain, and he paused in his thought to grasp it more firmly. A bear,—yes, that was what he was; a rough, dull-brained bear. Why had n't he been born clever, like some fellows he knew? Perhaps, if he had been less stupid, Ethel might have been ready to stay at home sometimes. It *was* tiresome for her, poor child. Thank Heaven! he had the means to gratify her every wish. How pretty, how delicate, how graceful she was, and how he loved her! If only he could feel sure that she loved him as he worshipped her, what a paradise life would be! But at the worst she was his,—she at least belonged to him, and no one could take her from him. Perhaps, too, some day she would grow to love him; and then —

"Why, Sleepy, what is the matter? You look positively inspired," — and the subject of his reverie appeared almost amused at the rapt expression on the face of her husband, an epitome of whose wonted demeanor was contained in the pet name she had employed. She turned from the contemplation of her delicate face in the glass, to flash at her spouse that caressing smile which she had discovered to be the "Open Sesame" of her matrimonial status.

He looked awkward. "Nothing," he murmured; and then, simply, "I was thinking of you, Ethel."

"*Ça va sans dire*, my love, of course. You may order Holt for half-past ten." She smiled at him once more, and then as he passed out her glance strayed again to the mirror, whereon it lingered playfully and fondly, as if self-fascinated. She was in her boudoir. She was attired in a long loose wrapper. Her hair had just been done. She leant forward to examine the effect more closely. Her lips were close to her own lips, and she seemed to be seeking the depths of her own eyes. They grew soft with the light of a sudden fancy.

"Narcisse?" she murmured.

She gazed, and now slowly the light seemed to fade from her face under the spell of her thought.

"Narcisse! Ah, yes, that is it; I love myself alone."

She leaned back in her chair and clasped her hands behind her head, still following in the glass the changing play of her expression. From gay it

turned to grave, from grave to something more than that, half tired, half sad.

What was life to her but the admiration of her reflected beauty in the pool, as in the old-time myth? What other interest had she? Existence was so vapid, hollow, colorless. And yet once it was so different,—once, and that only a short two years ago. She loved then. Yes; but that was all over now. She had ceased to care, the wound had healed. She had been a romantic girl, and her father had been right when he said she would get over it. "Ceased to care." Ah! why had she ceased to care? Why? Why was anything? Why had she become what she was, so hard, so indifferent, so cold? She was almost incapable of feeling now, and yet she was but twenty-five,—a girl still. Why was she so miserable?—she who ought to have been so happy. And how was it to end, what was to be the outcome of it all? She still lived, and she was but twenty-five. Her eyes dimmed with tears as she mused, and she covered her face with her thin white hands.

There was a knock, and the maid entering held out toward her mistress a florist's box, with a blithe "*En voilà un autre, Madame.*"

Ethel Fielding raised her head, and for a moment the sparkle of flattered pride danced in her eyes. There were those who said her face at times recalled the patrician qualities of her great-grandfather, Morris Linton, the caustic eloquence of whose thin lips had been the jewelled stiletto of

the United States Senate in years long past. They had been an aristocratic race, these Lintons, and their motto, *Ab uno disce omnes* — "From one learn all" — was carved upon their foreheads, as it were.

Removing the cover and the dainty gauze of cotton-wool in which the bouquet was swathed, she revealed a mass of pale pink roses. A card, enclosed in a tiny envelope, lay half hidden amid their leaves. This she seized with avidity and read. Dropping the same upon her toilet-table, she lifted up the flowers and held them at arm's length admiringly.

"Are they not lovely, Clementine?"

"Ah, oui, Madame."

Ethel drank in their fragrance in a long, audible breath, pressing them against her face the while. Then, with the air of one who had exhausted a sensation, she thrust the bouquet into the hands of her maid and said briefly, "Put it with the others."

"Bien, Madame."

When Clementine was gone, Ethel stood for a moment pensively; then picked up the card once more, and from her lips as she read fell a whispered "Mr. Donald Robinson." She shrugged her shoulders slightly, and stood looking into distance with a curious expression, hard, still yearning, about the mouth. The card had become a focus of nervous action, for she was bending it mechanically between her fingers.

"What is the use?" she said at length slowly.

"What can it lead to? And yet," she added through her teeth bitterly, "one must live."

Her eyes filled with tears. She picked up a lace handkerchief and passed it across her face with anger. But the pent-up tears still flowed, and a look as of a groping for support — for something to soothe her sense of desolation — stole over her. Her glance fell upon the toilet-table, and with sudden transport she reached out for and clasped a miniature crucifix which lay thereon. Pressing it to her lips she kissed with passionate tremor the sacred effigy, repeating the while, in whispers broken by sobs: "Thee only, blessed Saviour, Thee only." She fell upon her knees and buried her face in her hands.

At this same hour Peter Idlewild was standing contemplatively on the threshold of his large ball-room, lustrous with its chandelier, mirrors, and smooth inlaid floor, as yet untested by the foot of the dancer. He was in full dress. A brilliant solitaire blazed in his shirt-bosom in lieu of the ordinary triple studs of society. He softly slapped his snow-white kid gloves against the palm of his hand. From behind a recess skilfully concealed by large-leaved plants came the sounds of musicians tuning their instruments. None of the guests had as yet arrived. On a sofa close by in the adjacent parlor sat Mrs. Idlewild, in claret-colored velvet and diamonds. She smoothed out the folds of her dress, and leaned back against the cushions in languid complacency.

A buoyant step on the staircase announced the descent of Isabel. She entered the room beamingly. The virgin white of her *débutante* attire was relieved by a rose or two amid her masses of hair, and a superb necklace of pearls, the latest gift from her father.

Peter Idlewild turned at the sound of her step. "Well, Isabel!"

"Well, pa! Don't I look lovely?" and father and daughter gazed at one another for a moment with undisguised affection. The latter darted presently toward the ball-room.

"Oh, how perfectly fascinating the floor looks!" She clapped her hands together. "I'm just crazy to try it. Come, pa;" and seizing the old man she tried to drag him forward. They executed a few clumsy movements together, the girl laughing merrily the while. Mrs. Idlewild stood watching them at the door.

"What geese you two are!" she murmured; "you will tumble her all to pieces."

This last sentence was called forth by the father's taking Isabel's cheeks between his hands, as they stopped almost breathless at the threshold, and kissing her smotheringly. She shook herself free from his embrace. "Oh, pa, you can't dance a bit!" she cried, as she pirouetted off gayly by herself.

"Isabel, Isabel, you will not look fit to be seen," besought Mrs. Idlewild, despairingly.

"How, ma?" and with the impetus of the waltz she sailed up to her mother's side.

"I have cautioned you so often, dear, against using that vulgar form of expression. If you say *how* when you mean *what*, people will set you down as uneducated."

"And pa's duke won't have me in consequence! That would be dreadful, ma." She laughed gleefully, and passing her arm through that of her languid parent led the way back into the parlor to where, upon a little table, several large bouquets lay together. "Don't they look too beautiful, ma?" She picked up one of them and buried her face amid its fragrance. "It would be rather nice to marry a duke, would n't it?" she said reflectively. "Only think what fun it would be to be called 'My Lady'! And one could use all sorts of expressions then without shocking anybody. People would observe, 'It is only Her Grace's way;' and the way of a duchess must be correct, of course, ma."

At this moment the maid brought in another tell-tale green box.

"That makes four. What fun! *Merci*, Marie."

The French words, as pronounced by Isabel, had the effect of Mercy Marry, or perhaps Murray, thereby suggesting a possible sister of the late eminent Lindley,—a Puritan sister to boot, for *Mercy*, like *Mitty*, has a New England flavor. The fair perpetrator of this solecism proceeded to remove the wrappings of the box.

"Oh, ma, ain't they perfectly lovely?" She disclosed admiringly a mass of magnificent deep-red roses. A card lay among them. "Mr. Woodbury

Stoughton," she read aloud, half-wonderingly, and a faint flush crossed her cheek. "How nice of him!"

Mrs. Idlewild fanned herself with an air of gratification. "He seems to have taken quite a fancy to you, Isabel."

"Pshaw, ma, I don't think he has at all."

The old man scanned the flowers ruminantly. "That young Stoughton sent them, did he? Humph! He must have a good deal of money to spare. You can't buy roses like that for nothing. What does he do for a living?" he inquired abruptly.

"He's a lawyer, and doing very well, I hear," answered Mrs. Idlewild.

Isabel held the bouquet in her hand, and was picking over the exquisite buds pensively. "They are just too elegant for anything," she murmured. "I suppose they *did* cost all out-doors."

"Isabel!" groaned the mother, "where did you pick up such expressions?"

"By the way," said Mr. Idlewild, "did I tell you that I'd asked young Finchley to come to-night? He's a broker down town who sometimes does an odd job for me, and smart as a steel trap. He's with J. C. Withington & Company, and bound to get on."

"What does he look like, pa?"

"Look like? He looks like a man. Humph! There's nothing of the fashion-plate about *him*."

It happened some ten minutes later that the young man in question appeared upon the scene.

Galling as the consciousness of being the first arrival must have been to Finchley, he entered the room with a crook to his elbow, and tight compression by a couple of fingers of the bit of white cuff protruding below his sleeve, that argued neither diffidence nor dismay. When he shook hands he dipped his body and crooked the other elbow in a masterly fashion. His efforts at politeness were so elaborate as to be almost audible.

His host received him with cordiality. Finchley, despite his self-assurance, was so far deprived for a short spell of his natural glibness as to confine his remarks to rather stilted praise of the new establishment. But presently, encouraged withal by the old man's friendliness, he began to feel himself at home, and make himself agreeable, which was more or less synonymous with talking about himself. He proceeded to tell Isabel, in his forcible, persuasive way, sundry facts connected with his personality. In addressing the other sex his winning, ugly smile was accompanied by a sort of leer. He had recently bought a driving-horse, which he informed her was the finest driving-horse in New York. In fact, it was characteristic of Finchley that everything he possessed was the finest of its kind. He took an almost enviable satisfaction in his doings and belongings, and in expatiating thereon to his acquaintances. He had a vivid sense of his own attainments, and was never slow to let people know that he had risen to his present position by dint of his individual exertions.

In this connection, the dandified but well-bred young men for whom he carried stocks were a constant source of irritation to him. He sneered at their deportment, and behind their backs habitually characterized them as snobs.

And in this lay one of the keys to Finchley's disposition. The real cause of his aversion to these fashionable customers was to be found in his secret consciousness of their superiority. He recognized at heart that they possessed an indescribable air of gentility that, despite his cleverness, he could not attain. His efforts, however carefully studied, resulted but in a vulgarity palpable to himself, yet the cause of which he failed to fathom. With all his air of assurance and boldness he knew himself deficient, and chafed inwardly at the discovery. It therefore was a proud moment for him to have been invited to Peter Idlewild's ball, and he had taken care to make the most of the circumstance among the patrons of his office,—mentioning it quite accidentally, and with an air as if it were a matter of course.

Finchley was the son of respectable country trades-people. He had come to the great city at the age of sixteen, with his high-school education and a local prestige for smartness as his only capital. He had almost at once fallen upon his feet, as a firm of brokers, to whom he applied for work, happening to be struck by his apt replies, engaged him as a clerk. But it is not everybody who falls upon his feet that can stand, and here Finchley

had shown himself equal to his good fortune. His qualities were precisely suited to the needs of his employers, who from time to time had raised his salary during an apprenticeship of ten years, and had finally been led, by an intimation on his part of an intention to set up for himself, to offer him a share in their business. That had been some two years ago, and the firm of J. C. Withington & Company had as yet seen no reason to regret their decision. In fact they had prospered exceedingly, and the new partner had developed a wonderful knack of obtaining custom. His statements were so volubly confident in tone, so bewilderingly bristling with figures, that the desire for opposition on the part of the listener vanished. There was nothing half-way in his judgments. He rarely qualified his remarks. There were those who said he would persuade an inquirer that white was black to-day, and the contrary to-morrow, — but never that he was ambiguous or irresolute. He had been known to be a pronounced bull at the opening of the room, and a relentless bear at its close ; but if a customer were doubtful as to what course to pursue, he always found Finchley ready to decide the question for him, and supply him with abundant reasons for his action.

He had prospered also financially himself, and now enjoyed a comfortable income for a young bachelor — or, verily, for a married man — in any place but New York. And here, indeed, it is Finchley's views that we are expressing. He had

come, if the truth must be told, into the way of spending money almost with prodigality, and what others might consider a liberal competence seemed to him pitiful enough. He lived within his income, to be sure,—he was too shrewd a business man to commit so fatal an error as the reverse would imply,—but he already required a pretty handsome annuity to supply his wants. This had come about by degrees. While in the employ of the firm he had of course not been able, to any considerable extent, to indulge in extravagances; but the quality of his tastes had kept pace with his fortunes. He considered himself comfortably well-off for the present, but the horoscope of his future embraced sums beside which his present affluence seemed a mere drop in the bucket. He intended to make a fortune; and there was so little doubt in his own mind as to his chances of success, that the thought of economy, in anything more than a loose sense, rarely, if ever, occurred to him. He always *talked poor*, but that was by way of comparison, not because he was conscious of any privations.

In his personal habits, as in the item of expenditure, Finchley had kept upon the sunny side of the line. No one could call him fast in the liberal interpretation of the word, and yet his mode of life was unmistakably luscious so far as concerned his creature-comforts. He conformed to that which he saw about him, and, provided he had the example of others as an authority, was content to take the

world as he found it, without troubling his head much as to how things ought to be. A man is meant to enjoy existence, and in order to enjoy it he must have money ; such was the epitome of his philosophy. The world was good enough for him ; so he phrased it. Accordingly he took his cocktail socially, dined luxuriously, and played his occasional full hand for all it was worth, without any very definite moral twinges. He owned a neat open buggy, in which he drove the previously mentioned trotter, and was altogether content with his present condition of life.

V.

AN hour later the scene was completely altered. The chain of connecting rooms was crowded with a gay, brilliant throng. A maze of dancers whirled over the ball-room floor, the entrance to which was beset by that sombre body of unemployed men one sees at every large entertainment. In the main rooms—in one of which Mrs. Idlewild and Isabel were receiving—were grouped the elders, and such of the youthful spirits as preferred the more tranquil joys of conversation to the attractions of Terpsichore. Despite the numbers, the large size of the house prevented the effect of a crush. Everything on the two lower stories was thrown open. There were charming corridors through which to wander, and hushed retiring-rooms—the library, the picture gallery, and a seductive little boudoir—for those in search of isolation. The hall was full of nooks and crannies, just large enough to accommodate couples not averse to having their whispered confidences drowned by the peaceful splash of the neighboring fountain; and everywhere there were tasteful arrangements of flowers and beautiful ornaments and striking paintings to charm the gazer.

Arthur Remington and Woodbury Stoughton had come together, for they had been dining at the Sparrows' Nest,—a fraternity that had been brought into existence some two years before by a few fashionable but somewhat impecunious youths, who were barred by expense from joining one of the regular clubs. It was the fourth consecutive party at which they had been present this week, to say nothing of a dinner or two. The season was going to be a very gay one, according to the authorities.

The young men were fairly in the whirl of New York life. They commonly rose in the morning at the latest possible moment consistent with reaching their offices at half-past nine. To be breathless and breakfastless on arrival down town came to be with them no unusual occurrence. The twenty-four hours seemed excessively short, and they even begrudged the small allowance that it was necessary to devote to sleep. After a day of business they ordinarily reached home just in time to scramble into their dress-clothes. Dinner invitations, as well as those for later entertainments, were becoming very abundant. Rumor declared young men to be greatly in demand. The increasing corps of charming young ladies who composed "the blue-blood ballet," as Stoughton once phrased it, must be danced with by somebody. The older men grumbled at the lateness of the hours, and refused to stay to the german, so that partners were welcomed from among those new to the social stage.

But to-night there was a very large gathering of all ages. People were anxious to see the new house concerning the magnificence of which there were such prodigious rumors.

Remington had become so far interested in Miss Dorothy Crosby, that her whereabouts was now what first occurred to him upon entering a ball-room. They had met a number of times. They had sat side by side at dinner only the evening before, and he was to dance the german with her to-night. There was something about the girl that appealed to him in the highest sense. She seemed to satisfy that thirsty yearning for ideality to which he was susceptible, though if he had been asked to analyze why he liked her, his reply would probably have been that she was so refined and lady-like. Her disposition too seemed sweet, and her views of life were earnest and unworldly.

He was drawn to her all the more, though doubtless unconsciously, by the fact of his being rather disconsolate just now regarding his prospects. New York life was so very different from his expectation. The great ambition of everybody seemed to be to make an enormous fortune, and persons without means counted for very little. There was no repose. It was next to impossible not to be in a flurry and state of excitement most of the time. The competition was so great that one was obliged to overwork to avoid being left behind in the race. He had been warned, to be sure, that this was the

case, but the reality exceeded the description. He had been taught as a child to believe that his countrymen were the superiors of other nations in the quality of their thought and the character of their ambitions, and he was loath to regard this as an illusion. Had he not always conceived this to be the land of noble aims and exalted views of living, as distinguished from the degeneracy of the older countries? And yet looking about him he could not clearly distinguish the superiority of his fellow-citizens in the matter of tone and aim. They were very clever, but he missed that tendency in the direction of the ideal which during the reveries of his college days he had felt sure he would encounter in real life. This acting upon his mind, already brought face to face with the problems of materialism, had awakened within him many a cynical thought.

But to-night he was happy at the prospect of a delightful evening. At least he had come hither in that frame of mind; but from his present post by the door he could catch an occasional glimpse of Miss Crosby whirling through a ravishing waltz with a white-waistcoated exquisite, who wore a solitary stud that resembled a miniature plaque in his shirt-bosom. This was Ramsay Whiting, a young millionaire of good family, who happened as well to be very attractive and respectable. Remington was wondering who had sent her the second bouquet which she carried. He had himself committed the extravagance of sending her what would be ordi-

narily considered a handsome bunch of roses, but some other admirer had put his gift to the blush with a superb mass of Jacqueminots. He felt aggrieved without knowing exactly why. His sense of proprietorship, as it were, was offended.

When the waltz ceased he went up to speak to Miss Crosby. He was conscious of being a little glum, and the temper of his mood was not improved by the indifference of the young lady, who seemed to him much more partial to Mr. Whiting.

A few minutes later Remington found himself conveying Miss Lawton — whom his eye had chanced to fall upon after Miss Crosby went dancing off with Jack Idlewild, who had engaged her for the next waltz — through the various rooms. She was in her usual talkative mood, and began to entertain her escort in her demure way with a light running prattle, interspersed by comments on the mutual acquaintances they encountered. He fancied himself quite happy and amused; but who does not know the heartsickness of such peregrinations with the wrong girl?

"Oh, do look at Miss Nourse! I don't see why such large girls persist in wearing white. If I were her size I should limit myself to black silks. I sometimes think I may grow to be just as large. I am positively afraid to be weighed, I have gained so much this winter. Dissipation seems to agree with me."

"I adore fountains, don't you, Mr. Remington?" she continued, as they strolled in the queue of

couples through the spacious hall. "The splash is soothing to the nerves. But perhaps men don't have nerves. Yes, though, they must, for I was told yesterday that Mr. Harry Holmes is very ill with nervous prostration. But you seem preoccupied this evening, Mr. Remington, as if something were on your mind. I'm afraid I bore you dreadfully. Do take me straight to my chaperon, Mrs. Hollis Beckford. Mamma could n't come, so she promised to keep an eye on me. Don't I really bore you?" she went on to say, in response to the young man's iteration of never being more content in his life. "Still, I'm sure there's something on your mind. I do wish people could see into others' minds,—it would be so convenient, would n't it? Oh, there's Mrs. Fielding, with Mr. Don. Robinson. How lovely she looks, does n't she? I wonder who sent her all those flowers. Do you believe in a future life, Mr. Remington? They say, you know, Mr. Don. Robinson is an atheist. Is n't it a pity?—for he is rather fascinating to look at. I hear his wife feels dreadfully about it. That reminds me, talking of feeling badly, do you ever cry at the theatre? Do you know, I went night before last to see 'The Two Orphans,' and positively I—Oh, is this our dance, Mr. Brumley? Well, I'll tell you the rest another time, Mr. Remington;" and Miss Lawton, turning back her head over her dumpy little shoulder in mute pantomime of despair, was borne away by a sombre youth in kid gloves much too large for him.

Miss Idlewild naturally was fettered to her mother's side during all the early portion of the evening, receiving the guests. Remington had said a few words to her upon entering, and besought her to steal away for a waltz. "Oh, I can't, Mr. Remington. It would n't do at all. Wait until by and by, and then I'll give you one," she said effusively. She was looking her best. The increased flush of excitement was becoming to her. It had passed through Remington's mind, as he lingered for a moment watching her undergo the ordeal of reception, that he wished he could fall in love with her. She was certainly very beautiful, — twofold more beautiful, for instance, than Miss Crosby, — in the common sense of the word. Yet, much as he admired her, Isabel failed to inspire him as a whole. He was conscious of feeling himself in many ways her superior; or rather, perhaps, that she lacked those delicate qualities intimately associated with his vague ideal of what a woman ought to be. Perhaps it was his imagination, because he knew her origin; but was she not distinctly of the earth in her characteristics and tastes? And yet she was so frank, so guileless, so fresh and warm in all her ways! Whomever she did love she would love with her whole heart; there would be no lukewarmness in her passion. Calm analysis in such matters would be for her an impossibility.

The german came at last, and a magnificent affair it was, with its flowers and elaborate favors, which were each of an appreciable value. Isabel,

who danced with Ramsay Whiting, was in a state of enthusiastic rapture over the *fun* of being *out*. She received an amount of attention well calculated to turn the head of any girl, for her free and naïve ways made her speedily a favorite. The older heads among the beaus were attracted to try their fascinations upon so charming a subject. She seemed to be perpetually waltzing, and whenever she resumed her seat there was always a semi-circle of men about her chair. Prominent among these was Finchley, who — knowing but few people, and for once a little daunted by the consciousness of his own want of suppleness in social ways — stood his ground grimly among the worshippers of the young beauty. He seemed quite contemptuous of the conversation of the others, and the muscles of his face refused homage to the flow of badinage, save such as fell from Isabel's lips. Once in a while the coast was sufficiently clear for him to occupy for a moment the seat beside her. He was anxious to get her things, to oblige her in some way. Why did he not dance? she asked. He never danced. Would he not like to know some one? Her father, she was sure, would be delighted to introduce him to any one he desired. No, he preferred to stay where he was, if she did n't object. He was quite happy there, he said; and he sought by dint of his leer to convey an idea of his content. She was afraid he must find it terribly dull without dancing. The german was perfectly delightful, but unsatisfactory for conversation. One would just

get settled, and somebody was sure to come up and take you out.

Remington, whose own partner was almost as great a favorite, found himself frequently in Miss Idlewild's neighborhood. He made her the recipient of his bouquet in the flower figure, and was presented by her in turn with a silver matchbox. "Don't you like the favors?" she asked. "I thought it was nice to have them all different. Oh, I do think it's *such* fun, Mr. Remington. I had no idea I should enjoy society so much. Oh, thank you, Mr. Stoughton;" and Isabel rose to receive a bangle which the young man in question held out toward her. Again, as at Delmonico's, Remington noticed a curious expression in her face, and the flush on her cheek deepened as she sailed away in the waltz. He had watched her earlier in the evening with Stoughton, and been struck by a kind of embarrassed reticence in her manner. She was never like that to him. She always ran on in the most confidential strain. What was the trouble, he wondered. Could she be in love with Stoughton? Come to think of it, her bearing toward himself was somewhat as if he were a brother. If she cared very much for any one, she would probably be less frank. Well, even if she was in love with Stoughton, why should he care? He could not very well have told, if he had tried; but it is safe to state that no young man likes to have it made plain to him that he is regarded solely from a sisterly standpoint.

Remington had noticed, too, that Stoughton seemed to be quite devoted to Miss Crosby. Stoughton's own partner was Miss Tremaine, the giraffe-like young lady whom they had met at Mrs. Fielding's. She had, however, after the german was well under way, commenced a flirtation with Muchfeedi Pasha, a diplomat whom she had met the preceding winter in Washington. Miss Tremaine was no gosling. She had been out six winters, and understood perfectly how to arrange matters so as to obviate social suffering. She appreciated that Woodbury Stoughton had asked her to dance the german out of politeness, for he had stayed at her mother's house at Newport the preceding summer. He had done his part in recognizing the obligation, and it was for her to make things as comfortable for him as possible. She was too sensible to imagine that he would care to talk to her all the evening, and she was certain she was not going to bore herself by a *tête-à-tête* with a boy like *him*. They could perfectly well each have a good time apart, and yet preserve the form of union, after the manner of an ill-assorted couple that has agreed to keep the peace. She would have all the credit of having had a partner, and all the freedom that one sacrifices for such a trophy. There was a little boudoir adjoining the ball-room to which she accordingly removed herself with the aforesaid foreigner. "Be sure and tell me, Woodbury," — she had called him by his Christian name since they were babies together, — "when our turn comes. Remember, for

I dote on waltzing with you, you know." At the other extremity of the same ante-chamber Mrs. Fielding was ensconced with Mr. Don. Robinson.

The hours flew by, and it was now far into the night, — or, rather, early in the morning. The german was still being danced with vigor by a bevy of enthusiastic spirits, but there were gaps here and there in the circle that composed it. People had begun to go home, and a disposition to seek the seclusion of retired spots — where there was less liability to disturbance — had begun to show itself. It was pleasant to wander at will through the now thinned out rooms, and comment sympathetically on the taste of one's host, or sip an ice in the shadow of the library while your partner told you confidences about himself. The splash of the fountain was an attractive neighbor, especially where an arrangement of hot-house plants afforded two recesses within just the right earshot of its music.

"Let's sit down here, where it is cool, Mr. Stoughton," said Isabel. She was warm with the exercise of dancing, and a detached lobe of her hair, which had broken loose, gave her a somewhat dishevelled appearance. This but increased, however, the effect of her beauty. She reached down to pick up a strip of tulle, trailing from her skirt. "Oh, mamma will be madder than a March hare," she exclaimed, as she gazed, half ruefully, half gleefully, at the havoc.

She tore the strip off short. "Please put it in your pocket, Mr. Stoughton. I have n't got any

pocket. That's one of the disadvantages of being a girl. I should think you'd be awfully glad that you were n't born a girl."

"I should like to have been born anything half so lovely."

Isabel gave a flattered little laugh, accompanied by her artless "Really?" There was a pause. She sat with her eyes on her lap, and fingered thoughtfully the roses in her bouquet. She carried but one now; the others had been long since consigned to the table as too burdensome. Stoughton had recognized that it was to his that she had given the preference.

He sat watching her with all the rapt devotion of a lover in his manner. He was an adept at that sort of thing. It came to him as naturally as possible to give the impression to a woman that he was an admirer and perhaps a suppliant. His ordinary air suggested something of the kind, and when he saw fit to intensify it a little the guise was unmistakable. And yet, despite this ardent exterior, a curious train of thought was passing through his mind,—one that, as it were, irritated him. Did he really love this girl? Why was he paying her attention? She was very beautiful, very splendid, very attractive; but did he love her? He had been more or less devoted to her ever since they had met at Newport the previous summer, and he had sent her flowers on several other occasions. She was full of enthusiasm and charm; but would she make him the wife pictured to himself in those

ideal dreams for the future that he had cherished in secret? Her tastes, her ways, her thoughts, were wholly unlike his own. Compared with him she was illiterate, and her little lapses in grammar and grace stirred his sense of irony. Was she fit to be his helpmate in the struggle of life, to aid him with intelligent counsel and sympathy? She would love him with all her heart,—love him to distraction,—he did not doubt that; but would it not be a fervid, unreasoning passion, an infatuation that saw in him no faults, that was—in short—as blind as it was doting? He had always believed he should marry a woman who would be able to understand and appreciate his ideas and interests, who would be a companion as well as a lover.

Why, then, was he hanging about this girl? Was it not largely because she was to be very rich, because her father was worth millions? If she had been penniless, would he ever have thought of her in the way of matrimony? He might have enjoyed amusing himself with her for a time on account of her originality or beauty, but the idea of marriage would never have occurred to him. He was going to offer himself to her because of her money. He was going to sacrifice his ideal to a consideration of worldliness. He would weary of Isabel. She would be sure to bore him after his passion began to cool.

He shook himself mentally. Bah! Bother such suggestions. She was a magnificent, lovely creature, and his scruples were but the sentimentality

of a super-æsthetical fancy. The rest of the world consulted their material interests in the choice of a wife; and was he to fetter himself with moonshine, — with the shadow of a dream? The world was a practical place, and one must have money to live and get on. He was ambitious to succeed. He wanted to make a name for himself. A rich wife would be worth to him ten years of struggle. Besides, she was beautiful, ornamental, — everything, in fact, to make him an object of envy.

Why was he sitting here so coldly, so impassively? Why was he reasoning so deliberately? Many men in his place would be thrilling with passion. Why did he not feel the desire to seize this lovely girl in his arms, to clasp her to his breast? It would be cruel, it would be wrong, but it would be human; and he — he with his finespun notions and Puritan blood — was void of humanity. One's vital current congealed in this northern latitude, and split hairs with one's intellect. His ancestors had bequeathed to him, forsooth, a goodly heritage.

From behind the shrubs, on the other side of the fountain, a gentle laugh, which caused him a sensation of annoyance, fell on his ear. It was that of Dorothy Crosby, *tête-à-tête* with Remington. Ah! there was a girl indeed! Was she not the kind of woman he had dreamed of? Was she not charming enough to satisfy his ideal? If she were rich as Miss Idlewild, would he not to-day be at her feet?

These thoughts sped through his brain in the few seconds of silence.

"I want to thank you, Mr. Stoughton, for these lovely roses. It was awfully kind of you to send them."

The words permeated his reverie, and — with a gesture as of a clearing away of mental cobwebs, a desire as it were to prove to himself that he really loved her — he bent forward eagerly. "I could not help sending them. I wanted to send them."

"Well, they are very pretty," she said, seemingly ignoring, save for a tell-tale blush, the vehemence of his tone. She leaned backward on the lounge, and raised her eyes toward him experimentally, as the fascinated bird gazes at its magnetizer. But there was coquetry as well as curiosity, half-suspicion as well as a tribute to sorcery, in their blue depths. "Do you know, Mr. Stoughton, I sometimes think that you are laughing at me."

"Yes? Well, what can I do, Miss Idlewild, to assure you that such is not the case? — that, on the contrary, I —"

"Do? I don't know that you can do anything. But really I often feel that you must be saying to yourself, 'How foolish that girl is!' Don't you, really? Just own up that you do occasionally; I think I should feel better;" and she laughed gleefully.

Stoughton shook his head and looked at her admiringly. How charming her *naïveté* was, to be sure! She was so bold with others, so coy and gentle with him.

"I come from the country, you know," she went on to say, — as if, the ice of her reserve once broken, and possible doubts as to lurking irony dissipated, she rather enjoyed a free tongue, — "and am frightfully ignorant, — provincial, as ma calls it. Oh, the dear old country; I sometimes miss it so. I used to have splendid times there. I was a dreadful tomboy, I guess. Aunt Mitty always said so. That's pa's sister, who took care of me after I was too old to travel with the circus. Did you know that I once travelled with a circus, Mr. Stoughton?"

"No," said the young man.

"Well, I did. Does it shock you dreadfully? It was when I was quite little. I was on intimate terms with the Fat Woman, and the Three-legged Boy used to buy me candy. Pa said he had a *mash* on me."

She paused a moment, as they both laughed. "Oh, but those were delightful days. I wonder if I shall ever have such a good time again. Do you think, Mr. Stoughton, people have such a good time when they are grown up as they did when they were children?" she asked earnestly. Her face when serious had much of her father's firmness about the mouth, but the eyes were soft and far-away in their expression.

"Oh, yes, I think so. I enjoy myself more than I used to when I was younger," replied Stoughton.

"Do you?" she said dreamily. "Well, you're a man. I think somehow it's harder for girls." She

stopped for a second, reflectively. "You ain't very well acquainted with pa, are you, Mr. Stoughton?"

"Not very well."

"I was thinking," she said, "what I should do if anything ever happened to pa. I care for pa, you know, more than for everything else in the whole world. He's been awfully good to me. My mother died when I was born,—that is, my real mother. Here's her picture." And Isabel, unclasping a bracelet from her arm, revealed a small tin-type set in its back. It was the face of a pale, delicate woman, quite unlike that of the daughter, excepting for the eyes. Their shade was not discernible; but the same soft, yearning expression, that one noticed at times in those of Isabel, was plainly apparent.

Stoughton had taken the bracelet into his hand. "You do not look much like your mother," he said. "She must have been slighter than you."

"No," she answered almost joyfully, "they tell me I am pa's daughter. I am thought to be very like pa."

The young man still gazed from the one to the other. Ancestral portraits always interested him. He delighted to trace the signs of inheritance, and theorize therefrom. There must be a certain portion of the frail, sensitive mother in this blooming girl. It was easy to distinguish the father, but it was not from him that she had derived her gentleness of spirit.

"I wish ma had lived," she went on, as if in echo

of his speculative mood; "I miss her dreadfully sometimes. Things puzzle me. Are men ever puzzled, Mr. Stoughton? I have been wondering lately why we are made, and what it all means. I never used to bother my head much about such matters. I simply lived on and was happy." She was silent a moment, and leaning forward clasped her hands over one of her knees in her absorption. "Do you go to church, Mr. Stoughton?" she asked presently.

Her simplicity touched the young man, but the feeling produced upon him was rather one of pity, in which he detected, so to speak, the germ of future boredom. For him, with his agnostic views, or at any rate his searching, rigid tests, this girl would be no fit helpmate. She was leagues behind him in the region of thought. She would be unable to understand, to follow him. But, nevertheless, he unconsciously shrank, in his response, from asserting his position.

"Not very often, I am afraid," he said.

"Neither does pa. Ma goes, though. She takes me to the Episcopal Church." She paused again. "Do you believe all they say there is true?"

Stoughton hesitated. He leaned forward and spoke in a whispered tone, half impressive, half endearing: "Who can say in this world what is true and what is false, my dear Miss Idlewild?"

Meanwhile upon the other side of the fountain Remington was conversing with Miss Crosby, whom, finally, he had persuaded to desert the ball-

room. The young bud had been enjoying herself extremely, and her admirer would probably not have felt wholly flattered had he divined that her consent to exchange waltzing for a *tête-à-tête* proceeded mainly from the reflection that by the latter course she would be more likely to evade the scrutiny of her mother, whom she suspected of a design to carry her home prematurely. To have been taken out almost every turn in the german was an attention which had filled her cup of happiness quite to the overflowing point, and her vivacity rendered her more charming than ever in the eyes of her partner, who now was telling her some of his college experiences with a devoted air. Once established in a retired nook, she was quite reconciled to the situation. She liked Mr. Remington very much. He had been very kind, and his bouquet was a beauty. It was *so* nice of him to send it. Altogether she had had a "perfectly splendid" time.

Remington finished a tale of hair-breadth escape from a proctor with some self-congratulation, for his companion's eyes were sparkling with keen interest. Animation was becoming to her, and made her thoughtful face very expressive.

"Men have such good times," she murmured, in a tone of arch despondency. "They have so much more freedom than we poor girls. I often wish I were a man. They have such opportunities."

She clasped her hands reflectively. "If I were a man, I'm certain I should be very ambitious," she went on to say.

"What would you do?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. I think I should be a lawyer — and — and then go to Congress. My father was a lawyer, you know. But of course you would n't know. You are a lawyer too, aren't you, Mr. Remington?"

"I believe so."

"You don't seem very enthusiastic on the subject. I used to think," she exclaimed laughingly, with a sudden recurrence to her previous thought, "that I should like to be an author. I would give anything to be able to write poems or novels. But I never could, I'm sure. Do you write at all, Mr. Remington?"

"I wrote verses occasionally when I was in college."

"Oh, how interesting! Have n't you some with you that you can read to me?"

Remington laughed. "I don't as a rule carry verses concealed about my person, Miss Crosby. Besides, I have given up all that sort of thing now. I'm a worker, and have no time for the poetry of life."

His tone made her look serious again. "Do you have to work very hard?" she asked. "I think all the men in this country work too hard, don't you? Why should it be so?"

Remington answered that it was because they all wanted to make money. Everybody was afraid that some one else would get his business if he was n't always on hand to look after it. He explained to her

how difficult it was for a young fellow without influence to back him to get ahead. One might take great risks, of course, but then you were liable to lose everything. "You see," he added, a little more gayly, "there are disadvantages in being a man, after all. Girls remain at home and escape all these worries."

"Yes; but they have their own, Mr. Remington. A girl's life is so monotonous and empty. Her occupations are all so petty. She has such a narrow field of usefulness, and there seems no way of doing anything great and noble. If one ever attempts what is out of the common run, people are sure to call you peculiar." She spoke with her head on one side, almost as though soliloquizing. "There is so much to do, Mr. Remington, when one considers the misery that exists in the world."

"I know," said Remington. He was silent for a moment. "It's a puzzling age to have been born in. I used to think in college that it would be all plain sailing, and if a man only lived up to his principles and was true to himself he would get on easily enough. But it's pretty hard work holding on to one's ideals in this place. It sometimes seems as if the happiest men are the ones who try to get all the amusement they can out of life. Those who have been hewing at the granite wall of destiny for so many centuries, in the hope of solving the riddle of existence, do not seem to have made a great deal of progress."

"Oh, but don't you think the world is a great

deal better than it used to be?" asked the girl, with a deep interest written on her thin intellectual face.

"I don't know exactly what you mean by better. The world runs smoother, I think. People are more comfortable, and are willing to do more to make others comfortable. I dare say it is better."

She sat looking before her, lost in the pure reverie of budding womanhood, smelling now and again, with unconscious movement, of the roses sent by him over whose words she was grieving. "Life is a very strange thing, isn't it? But I don't believe men have been trying all these thousands of years to find out what it means for nothing, do you? I can't help feeling that I am somebody, and that what I do in this world will make a difference somehow, — somewhere. The trouble is, one can do so little. One is so powerless to make others happy."

"I should not think you would find much difficulty in doing that," he said significantly, in a quiet tone.

The girl roused herself from her abstraction, and blushing replied that he knew her very little.

"Here is mamma come to capture me," she continued; and she rose to greet Mrs. Crosby, who stood at the entrance to their hiding-place.

"Dorothy, where *have* you been? I've been looking for you everywhere."

"Here, mamma, all the time since I stopped dancing. It is deliciously cool so near the fountain."

"Well, it's time to be going now. I do hope you have n't caught cold."

Ten minutes later, Remington and Stoughton encountered each other in the supper-room, whither the need of a little refreshment after the labors of the evening had driven them.

"That Miss Crosby you were dancing with seems a nice girl," said Stoughton, as he impaled a raw oyster.

"She's very pleasant."

"She looks like a lady. It's a comfort to see a thoroughbred after so much of the imitation article. She's intelligent too, is n't she?"

"I have found her so."

"Well," said Stoughton, presently, "I've had enough of this. Let's skip."

They both seemed thoughtful as they passed through the nearly empty rooms.

"It's a pity she's poor as a church mouse."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Remington.

"Miss Crosby, of course."

"Oh!"

Further conversation on the point was interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Tom Fielding, who came gliding down stairs enveloped in swan's-down. The two young men hurried forward with offers to look after her carriage. "Thank you; Mr. Fielding has ordered it, I believe."

Remington stood talking with her while she waited. She took him playfully to task for having

deserted her all the evening. "You must come and see me again soon, Mr. Remington. I was reading yesterday a new poet to whom I want to introduce you."

Remington bowed a smiling acquiescence. She was very charming, to be sure, he reflected, and quite too sylph-like to belong to the heavy-faced, big-bearded man, who now stood veiling his impatience under a forced smile.

"You had better look after your friend. I fear he is a sad flirt. I thought the young lady was your peculiar province," whispered Mrs. Fielding, as she said good-night.

Remington's eyes, following the direction indicated, caught sight, through a vista of parlor reflected in a mirror, of Woodbury Stoughton leaning against a mantel-piece and looking down at Miss Idlewild. The girl was fastening in her bosom a brilliant rose, which he evidently had just given her.

Afterwards Remington remembered that Mrs. Fielding's face wore an expression that betokened annoyance almost, and he heard her tell her husband, in the doorway, that she felt tired.

VI.

REMINGTON and Stoughton found it very difficult to avoid burning the candle at both ends ; for, with all the excitement of society, their days down town were by no means idle. Even in the way of law they managed to pick up a little business. An aunt of Remington, for instance, had employed him to obtain a divorce for one of her deserving poor, who was in straits ; and he had so far acquired the interest—the sentimental, not the metallic article—of a money-lender, whose office adjoined his own, as to induce Shylock to intrust him with a small collection suit. This Remington had won, — but rather, as he believed, from the fact that the justice selected to hear the cause was a personal friend of his client, than from the merits of the case. In like manner Stoughton managed to obtain an occasional fee toward the defraying of his office-rent.

Remington was spending his clientless moments in the preparation of a treatise on Railroad Law, in which he fancied himself much interested. He had felt it necessary to find a substitute for kicking his heels in his office. Besides, it had always been

an intention of his to write a book of some kind ; and a successful publication in the line of his profession would be likely to give him a start. The subject was engrossing, he found, and he pegged away at it with a good deal of enthusiasm. The necessity of research in connection therewith obliged him to be absent from his office at times ; and Stoughton, who was apt to call round to get his friend to lunch, would often find the door embellished with a bit of cardboard, inscribed : "At the Law Association, — back at 1:30." Stoughton was wont to laugh at this studying law in cold blood, as he called it. "Why don't you put, 'At the Supreme Court,' Arthur? It would look a great deal better." "Yes, but nobody would believe it." "What if they didn't? They'd admire your enterprise. I tell you, my dear fellow, I've come to the conclusion you and I are too devilish conscientious. We don't advertise ourselves enough. There's a Hoosier now in my entry who does n't know quarter the law I do, and yet he has four times my professional income. I asked him one day how he got his practice, and he told me he began by begging it. He lived in a boarding-house, and interested the lodgers in his briefless condition. Fancy going about asking people to give you law business! Well, it probably never occurred to him that there was any objection to it. I suppose it's our misfortune that we see things differently."

Stoughton had himself been acting to a certain extent on his own theory. As has been said, this

text-book writing did not appeal to him. He had had enough of mere study, he felt, for the present, and was ambitious to try his hand in practical fields. A good law-book would not help him on very fast toward either fame or fortune. He still kept up, to be sure, his old voracious habit of reading, but it rarely took the direction of legal inquiry. In one of the bottom drawers of his desk a supply of the latest publications in the line of philosophy, poetry, and fiction was to be found. His new interest, however, was politics, which he conceived might help him toward an introduction to the litigious portion of the community. His own acquaintance he had discovered to be exasperatingly pacific; or if they ever did get into the meshes of the law, the interests involved were apt to be of the kind that require the services of eminent counsel. Those young lawyers seemed to flourish who had gained the confidence of the small trades-people and mechanics. Such folks were always getting into difficulties.

Accordingly he had begun to attend the caucuses in his ward, and hobnob with some of the local politicians. He was aware that his manners were against him, so to speak, and that he wore too good clothes to attract the favor of those who handled the wires; but he did not permit himself to become discouraged. He had always been able at college to tell a story with effect, and his songs were still referred to by present undergraduates (he had been told) as something out of the common. A little sociability on his part, he felt sure, would win over

those who looked at him askance. He had, of course, decided views regarding the necessity of improving political methods, but it would be judicious not to offend the managers at the outset. He tried, therefore, to be cordial with such of his fellow-citizens as he encountered at these gatherings, and to avoid anything that might suggest to them invidious distinctions. He even studied their methods in the way of etiquette, and in pursuance thereof invariably removed his glove before shaking hands, — which was considered a badge of breeding in municipal circles.

On one occasion he made a speech, which had the effect of turning the scale in a close contest for candidates for the Assembly. It happened that Finchley the broker, who was of the same political faith, spoke upon the opposite side, and was so much surprised at such an ebullition of intelligence on the part of one whom he had set down as “a gilded flat,” that he greeted Stoughton with distinct cordiality on their next meeting, and gave him a valuable point on the stock market. Finchley was himself an aspirant for political preferment; and his bustling, business-like demeanor stood him in good stead. The knowing heads pronounced him as likely to go to the Legislature in a year or two.

It was the habit of Remington and Stoughton to drop in after luncheon at the broker’s. That had become quite as much a part of the programme of the day as the meal itself. Who that is familiar with the purlieus of Wall Street has not been struck with

the change that has come over the appearance and methods of that great money centre within the past few years? Wide-spreading, massive buildings, towering with roof ornament, the uttermost parts of which — thanks to that modern invention, the elevator — are available, dwarf the unpretentious structures of yore. An air of exceeding prosperity pervades the throng that pours at noontide along the pavement toward the restaurants, — a throng denser than ever, and scarcely more at leisure than formerly, but better groomed. The traditional gaunt physiognomy is less frequently observable. In its stead the eye falls on well-built, scrupulously dressed men, strongly allied, save for a freer bearing, to the upper-class Englishman, — on faces foreign in type, suggestive of the German, the Hebrew, and of a blending of the two, — suggestive, in fact, of every variety of nationality.

But, despite its motley composition, there is little of the Old World in the temper of this crowd. With the change of soil, they seem to have imbibed the peculiar restlessness that marks the American character. The feverish rush and hurry of our ancestors is still observable. One takes, to be sure, after the Continental fashion, his coffee upon rising, and eats substantially at mid-day; but who, pray, lingers more leisurely over the repast because of its greater profusion? The long counter, with its row of high stools, — favorite resort of gastronomic minute-men; the dense array of little tables, among which waiters bustle with scurrying slapdash; the

resonance of laughter, the clatter of crockery, and tramp of feet, falling on an atmosphere where the oyster-bed and brewery compete in full-flavored rivalry, — who is not familiar with the economics of a down-town restaurant ?

In most of these resorts — which are, however, with all their turbulence, luxuriously furnished — a stock recorder, technically known as the ticker, a veritable symbol of Black Care at the horseman's back, plays its spasmodic tune in some conspicuous recess adjacent to the stream of life that comes and goes. It is, indeed, a monument well adapted to mark the temper of the age. Now and again some customer steps aside to pass the tape over his hand with a quick jerky movement, but the mass move by without swerving. Nor, forsooth, is its presence needful to suggest to the lunching public the existence of a short cut to fortune. What is the use of examining the list where every one can see you, when J. C. Withington & Company are just round the corner ? The grave attorney, who passes this modern guillotine without a wink of the eyelid, has already posted himself regarding the quotations of the day, believing doubt as to the state of one's margin to be a poor table companion ; and the two clerks who trot by so blithely arm in arm, as if their worry was but second-hand, — their master's business, — are on the way to the broker's.

Remington and Stoughton had each, as has been stated, some four or five thousand dollars ; which is a sum ill suited to the purchase of high-priced,

or, as the envious style them, gilt-edged securities. One can buy outright but a very small interest in safe railroad properties with that amount of cash, and the return on the investment is correspondingly inadequate. Moreover, a man who purchases twenty, or even fifty shares of stock, and pays for them, makes but a paltry profit in case of a rise of ten dollars in the market price, compared with him who carries a couple of hundred on a twenty per cent margin. All this argues strongly in favor of the theory that wildcat, and hence cheap, properties are the consolation of the impecunious who visit Wall Street. Not only can one get two or three times as much stock with the same amount of money, but the chances for improvement are infinitely greater ; and if you buy on a margin, you can carry enough of such stuff to make you comfortable for life in case things turn out as well as you expect. Of course there are risks, — what is not attended with risk in this world ? — and you may come to grief ; that is, to quote the parlance of the street, be sold out. 'But, after all, it is nobody's affair if you are. The margin is your own ; and so, vulgarly speaking, is the funeral. The broker will look after himself ; trust him for that. There is no need troubling one's head on that score.

One cannot, it must be confessed, support this buying what one has not the means to pay for (despite all absence of concern regarding your broker) on any theory of ethics. But then, reasoned

Stoughton, it is the custom of the country, and is getting to be the way of the world. In short, everybody does it; and as we grow older, we become much more content to travel in the same boat with everybody else. There is safety in numbers; and, moreover, we have the reflection to console us, in case we go to pieces in the process, that it will be all the same a hundred years hence. That is the left bower of our philosophy; and the right bower is the undeniable need of growing rich. It is a question of chances simply, and we are ready to take the risk. The steady humdrum road will probably lead us to competency in the end, if we live long enough; but we want the money *now*. He was young, and could enjoy to-day. Thirty years hence would find him nearly bedridden. He was prepared to take the risks. Bring on your wildcats.

And then, too, after all, would one come to grief? Statistics show, it is said, that ninety-nine out of every hundred men who frequent brokers' shops are ruined. Granted, perhaps; but who is to guarantee that we are not to be the hundredth man? Other fellows are rash and short-sighted, ignorant and unreasoning. They buy at fancy prices, and without careful investigation. It is playing with fire, of course; but if one is prudent, and goes into the thing systematically, there is no reason why one should not make a handsome thing out of it in a quiet way. Study up values, and post yourself on the actual condition of properties,

and you have the key to the situation in the hollow of your hand.

Such is a coarse presentation of the reasoning that induced Woodbury Stoughton to sell out the disgustingly safe bonds in which his pittance was invested, and locate, as the newspapers delight to say, the proceeds elsewhere. The rumor reached him that Olney & Longville — a Southern railroad, which, like the decayed gentry of that cotton clime, had known better days — was about to advance. He had the point from an insider (at least his informant declared himself to be one); and a shrewd knowledge of whom to trust was one of the characteristics upon which Stoughton prided himself. He acted at once, and, buying at eighty-five, had the satisfaction of seeing, within three days, his purchase rise fifteen per cent. Finchley, through whom he had dealt, suggested the advisability of realizing such a handsome profit; but the young speculator thought otherwise. "It will sell at one hundred and fifty. I am advised to cling on to it," he remarked knowingly. This had been just after the speech at the caucus, and Finchley felt therefore less disposed to criticise his customer. The result proved the soundness of Stoughton's judgment, as the latter expressed it to Remington. He sold out, at the end of ten days, at one hundred and twenty-five. "Not bad for a flyer," he remarked, with elation. And indeed it was not. He had bought two hundred shares, and put up his original four thousand dollars as a margin. His property

had exactly trebled itself. Previous to this he had already made a few hundreds by his ventures in Northern Pacific, and one or two other stocks. But then he had bought outright, and hence been able to hold only a few shares at a time. This other sort of thing was much more satisfactory, and just as safe if one only used judgment.

Remington, on the other hand, had been less fortunate. He had held off entirely for some time, merely sufficing himself with changing his bonds for an eight per cent stock that was almost as unprofitably sound. Speculation was one of those methods that stuck in his ethical crop. He had been brought up with the idea that it was not quite reputable, and altogether unsafe. But then, to be sure, every one did speculate nowadays; and what Stoughton said was true enough, in a sense. The money was his own; and if he was shrewd enough to see a way of increasing it at a little risk, why should n't he? All business was attended with more or less risk, and it was the man who had the longest head who usually came out at the top of the heap. As to buying what you could n't pay for, and selling what you had n't got, that kind of thing was not confined to stocks. It existed in all departments of trade,—in grain, cotton, and the various raw materials; in fact, it was the principle of most modern business. And so Remington had by degrees got into the habit of taking flyers also. It was an easy way of making money, and his expenses were undoubtedly increasing. But Olney

& Longvilles are not to be found every day ; or if one is fortunate enough to run across one, there is apt to be a corresponding drop in something else on the list which you hold. Remington's stocks had n't gone up for a cent, to adopt a bit of financial slang. He had experienced hard luck, too, inasmuch as he had seen several ventures which he had tipped out, after holding them for a month without profit, jump up five points the day after. "You get scared too easily ; you don't sit on things long enough," Stoughton would say with the air of a connoisseur. "A man can't expect to make a fortune in a minute. Now, for instance, I bought yesterday a thousand shares in a Nevada silver mine — the Morning Star — that I shall very likely have to hold for a year. I got in at bottom prices, and I am going to sit on it. You have n't done badly as a whole. You're ahead on the entire racket for the year. What's the use in souring on your luck? If you only persevere and use judgment, you'll come out all right."

Thus life down town was interesting enough. From one end of the week to the other there was very little chance for rest ; and when Sunday came, — well, on Sunday most fellows slept pretty late. Remington did, however, usually manage to get to church about every other Sabbath. It was his intention to go always ; but the arms of Morpheus are tenacious, when one has an opportunity of making up arrears. Still, Miss Crosby worshipped at the same sanctuary.

Sunday is not really much more of a day of rest in New York than any of the other six. Every one blessed with female acquaintances has occasionally to visit them; and frequenters of balls and dinner-parties must call on their benefactors if they wish to be counted in next time. At least, Mrs. Fielding made it an invariable rule never to ask any one inside her house who had not acknowledged in person a previous invitation. She, to be sure, could afford to be select; and the same action on the part of a less admired hostess might have produced derision rather than consternation. But even the most lax and barefaced of youthful spirits are apt to bewail their negligence regarding visits. We would call if we only had *time*, they all cry; we never get up town in time. But then there is Sunday; and the truly conscientious young man reads the commandment: "Six days thou shalt labor and do all that thou hast to do, and the seventh day thou shalt call." Even Stoughton, who habitually cut church, and spent his forenoon propped on the pillows, amid the Penates of his own chamber, with the Sunday papers, always shaved himself in time to make one or two visits before dinner.

One Sunday afternoon, about three weeks after the Idlewilds' ball, Woodbury Stoughton dropped in upon Miss Crosby. He had intimated to her at a party a few nights before that he would try to do so. Those who knew Dorothy well, and were familiar with the brilliant career and marriage of

her sister, Mrs. Maclane, had prior to her *début* shaken their heads a little in private. She was bookish and quiet. She had ever evinced so much taste for more tranquil pleasures that there might be a question as to whether she would become enthusiastic over society. And to be successful in the gay world one must be enthusiastic. She was of course very pretty and ladylike, and sweet to look at. But would she *say* anything, — would she talk? Were not her quiet ways likely to obscure her real cleverness, and deter prudent men from running the risk of stranding themselves for the evening by conversing with her? Balls are not, or ought not to be, charitable institutions; and girls who draw into their shells are apt to have a dull time. A few evenings of neglect are quite as sufficient to sour the feminine milk of human kindness as a thunder-storm the ordinary lactic fluid; and was not Dorothy just the sort of young person to set down society as hollow, because nobody asked her for the german?

Our nearest and dearest, however, prove sometimes quite mistaken in their predictions. What a miss of eighteen will develop into before the close of her first winter is beyond the calculation of parents. Mrs. Crosby, to be sure, had expended every penny that her income would allow to have her daughter well dressed; but exquisite clothes never yet made a girl a belle. Dorothy's air of good breeding and eloquent face had drawn to the small parlor in Washington Square, where she was

wont to provide five-o'clock tea, a goodly array of admirers ere many weeks of the winter had slipped away. Men liked to talk to her, for she was always so sympathetic, and ready to show interest in what concerned them. She was quick to catch the meaning of their various theories and pet ideas; and new lines of speculation were apt to call forth from her eyes that expression of intensity which was flattering to the speaker. She was a good deal of a belle; or, rather, she would have been a tearing success had it not been currently known that she was comparatively portionless. As it was, she received much attention in a quiet sort of way; and the sight of occasional superb bouquets in her hand at parties, or cut flowers on the parlor table, filled the hearts of such of her admirers who could not afford these expensive tokens of devotion with uneasiness.

"No, thank you; tea always spoils my appetite for dinner," said Stoughton, in response to her proffered hospitality; and he watched Miss Crosby pour out a cup for herself with a graceful undulatory movement of the arm, and her head on one side as if she were pondering the virtuous wisdom of his remark. She had of course no suspicion of the cocktail he would order some three quarters of an hour later. She was fascinating; no doubt about that. She would make a charming wife for a man. But what was the use of upsetting himself by thinking on impossible things? He could n't afford to marry the girl. He had come here to have a quiet chat. It was a great pleasure

to talk to her, for she always comprehended him so easily.

"I hope, Mr. Stoughton, you have brought with you the verses you spoke about the other evening at Mrs. Lawton's."

"Yes, I have them somewhere about me, I believe. They're only servile plagiarism anyway," he said, fumbling in his tail pocket. "Ah, yes, here they are."

As he proceeded to unfold the manuscript, Dorothy leaned back in the big arm-chair, and clasped her hands on her lap, prepared to listen. "What fun it must be to be able to write!"

Stoughton gave a little prefatory cough.

I'd love thee, sweet, forever,
If I were not the child of fate;
No power our days should sever,
Could I but burst the gate
Which keeps our lips apart,
Keeps thy heart from my heart.

But destiny unbending,
And ruthless as the sea,
Cries, "Though love have no ending,
To love is not for thee!"
And I—

Just then the portière was drawn aside to admit a visitor. It proved to be Mr. Ramsay Whiting, whose attentions to Dorothy had become conspicuous of late.

"Hard lines," murmured Stoughton, under his breath, which expression, however, was intended to be typical of his luck, not of the verses.

"I hope I have n't interrupted anything," said Whiting, conscious of the pause which followed his reception by Miss Dorothy.

"Oh, no," she replied, naively. "Mr. Stoughton was just reading some poetry he had written. Perhaps he won't mind going on now."

"Do! Don't mind me, really," exclaimed the new-comer, urgently, but with a slight grin.

Stoughton begged to be excused. The verses were nothing, he said, but a condensation of a little philosophical discussion he and Miss Crosby had entered upon the other evening. The idea of reading them before Ramsay Whiting, who, good fellow as he was, had probably never opened a book of poetry of his own accord in his life, struck him as immensely humorous, and he returned the other's grin with interest. Whiting was going to devote himself to farming. He had some fine lands in the interior of the State, and his large fortune would allow him to sow without reaping for many years to come. He had set to work, however, most industriously, and the world were agreed that Dorothy would be just the wife for him.

"That black bull is dead," he observed confidentially, when Stoughton had taken his departure.

Dorothy sometimes got tired of agriculture as a topic of conversation, but Mr. Whiting was so kind and amiable that she managed in the end to excuse his lack of brilliancy.

"Yes," he replied, in response to her expressions of sympathy, "I should rather have lost any of the

others. But, by the way, Miss Crosby, I told Hines to send down that bay mare I spoke to you about. She would just suit you, I'm sure, and I shall be delighted if you will ride her."

The eager manner of the young man made Dorothy blush a little. "You are very kind," she said, "but I'm afraid I shall not be able to ride this spring. What with society and my German and music lessons, I have all to do I can possibly find time for. Oh, how do you do, Mr. Remington?" She rose to greet her friend.

Despite the graciousness of his welcome, Remington was very formal in his behavior. Ramsay Whiting had been there lately whenever he called. There were roses on the piano, and she wore some in her corsage also. Whiting is rich, he thought, and she is going to marry him for his money. That's the way with girls nowadays,—they are all so mercenary. He had supposed this one to be an exception.

He sat indenting the carpet with his cane, and saying but very little. For the sake of politeness he laughed in a sickly fashion when anything amusing was said by the others, who were now talking briskly. Dorothy seemed quite excited and interested. Apparently she paid no attention to Remington's moroseness. When he arose to go, as he did soon, under the influence of his mood, she bade him good-by, all smiles and quite indifferently.

Ramsay Whiting's attentions had given great satisfaction to Mrs. Crosby, who, as she often an-

nounced to her daughter, had heard nothing but pleasant things regarding him. He had good manners, and was irreproachable in his habits; so every one said. "He is n't very bright, mamma," remarked Dorothy, that evening. Mr. Whiting had stayed nearly an hour, and had not been especially edifying, as Pauline Lawton would have said.

"I sometimes think, my dear," replied her parent, after a pause, "that you have too romantic ideas on these matters. I sympathize of course with your general views; but you must not forget, Dorothy, that, after all, life is practical. You cannot expect to find perfection in this world."

"No, mamma, I don't see many signs of it," said the daughter, a little wickedly. They were both busy with their work. Dorothy had in hand a large piece of canvas, on which she was embroidering flowers in floss. She glanced up for an instant stealthily at her mother, the click of whose large wooden needles was the only sound in the little parlor for some minutes.

"Why is not Mr. Ramsay Whiting, Dorothy, as attractive as Mr. Stoughton or Mr. Remington?"

"I did not say he was n't, mamma."

"No, my dear; but I have noticed that you seem to have a partiality for young men who are without prospects. You must not misunderstand me, Dorothy. I do not wish to say anything against your friends, or to make mercenary suggestions. I believe them both to be most excellent young men; but they are neither of them likely to be

in a position to be married for a long time to come."

"They are getting on very well in their practice."

"I dare say, dear; but it takes a large income nowadays to go to housekeeping with."

"I'm sure I don't want to go to housekeeping with any one. In the first place, nobody has asked me; and in the next, I would n't have them if they did," said Dorothy, emphatically. "I don't see why you're in such a hurry to marry me off, mamma."

"When your father and I started life together," said Mrs. Crosby, — who, lost in a reflection on matrimonial wherewithals, scarcely heeded her daughter's remark, — "we had only fifteen hundred dollars a year. We kept one servant, and put out the washing. I don't see how we lived exactly, but we managed to get along." She shook her head mournfully in the fulness of her reminiscence, for those had been happy years she was recalling. "Girls to-day are not content unless they have everything their fathers and mothers left off with."

Dorothy made no reply. She was used to these discussions with her mother, one of whose hobbies was the matrimonial question. "Mamma will never be quite happy until she has me off her mind," Dorothy was wont to remark. With all their affection for each other, — and they were extremely devoted in a way, — Mrs. Crosby had not been able to establish that relation with her daughter which springs from a complete sympathy of tastes and

ideas. They were much together ; and Dorothy would have done anything in the world to please her parent ; but somehow or other she had ceased to make of her a confidante, — to share with her the puzzling reflections that occur to every thoughtful girl. Why this was so, Dorothy scarcely knew herself. It had come about by degrees, as do all such partial estrangements, and was a frequent source of unhappiness to both. Mrs. Crosby complained in sour moments of being lonely, and at such times openly grudged the intimacy that Dorothy enjoyed with Pauline Lawton, a younger sister of the vivacious Florence. The daughter was apt to remain silent under such accusation. She recognized the truth of the statements. She *did* tell Pauline everything, and concealed her intimate self from her mother. Still, how was it to be remedied ? That was the important point ; and here it was that Dorothy realized, as it were, a certain hopelessness. "Mamma does not understand me," she would say to herself, as she lay recumbent on the outside of her bed, where she was apt to throw herself for reverie at night before undressing. "She does not care for the things that I do. My ideas do not interest her. We are different."

Mrs. Crosby was a plump, easy-going woman, between forty-five and fifty. She had retained much of the vivacity and quickness of wit which had marked her as a girl, as well as that peculiarly cordial manner which makes many Baltimoreans so charming. She wore habitually a bellish air, as

if wishing the world to believe that, though unlikely seriously to consider a second marriage, she was still able to control her destiny in this respect. She now rarely went into society on her own account ; but her little parlor was a favorite resort for some of the cleverest men in town, — men who, like the hostess herself, were in the prime of middle life. She delighted to see people, and always had enough to say, — a circumstance which rather tended to put poor Dorothy, who had little of the maternal sprightliness before company, in the shade. Mrs. Crosby was every inch a lady, and bore the privations of a very moderate income with a perfect dignity. She had never wholly laid aside the mourning put on for her husband fifteen years ago. Black silk was becoming to her ; but, apart from that, she eschewed gay colors out of sentiment. She spent much of her leisure in reading clever French novels.

Under the pressure of that propensity to analyze their parents which is a characteristic of American girls, Dorothy had often puzzled her mind as to what her mother had been like at her age. The romantic story of her parents' run-away match was of course familiar to her, and had shed, so to speak, a wake of poesy over her youth. There had been a time when mamma had seemed to her the very embodiment of genuine romance ; but that was long ago. The change in the daughter's feelings had, as has been said, taken place gradually ; but a sense of reluctant criticism had grown up in its stead within

her heart. Her mother seemed to her now so indifferent to ideal considerations, so matter-of-fact, if not worldly, in her estimates! If she did not laugh at things which were sacred to Dorothy, she took no interest in them, or spoke of them as of secondary importance. It was perhaps, after all, not so much what Mrs. Crosby said, as what she did not say, that troubled the girl. It was the apparent diversity in their respective plans of life that oppressed poor Dorothy. Would she herself be like that some day? Was mamma once as much in earnest and as full of aspirations as she? How often would she ponder these questions and the train of thought which they set in motion, in the solitude of her chamber!

She was, indeed, in earnest, — sweet, serious-faced Dorothy; and, hand in hand with her idealism, she had nourished a clear and penetrating intelligence, — an intelligence that, moreover, was analytic in its processes. With all her susceptibility to sentimental considerations, she was pre-eminently a seeker after truth. Her mind was a tribunal where she criticised her every action with rigid impartiality. She liked to sift things to the bottom, and to flood them with light. Speculation and inquiry interested her, and she was ever alive to there being two sides to most questions. Her attitude was almost judicial, so deliberate did she strive to be in her judgments. She possessed a strong humorous perception (although, in common with all women, unable to appreciate a jest at her own

expense), and a fund of irony, which she did not hesitate to employ against herself.

This habit of unflinching introspection was one of Dorothy's chief characteristics. Inherent in her disposition, which strongly resembled that of her father, it had been fostered by, or rather it had fostered itself upon, the excellent school training she had received. To be sure, it had had the effect of making her, during the last year or two prior to her *début*, reserved and conscious, perhaps a little morbid. But she had acquired thereby a potent grasp over herself. Her shyness and self-absorption at that period had been a source of uneasiness to her mother, who had looked for a repetition of Mrs. Maclane's vivacity. Brimful as she was with feeling, Dorothy had been deficient in demonstrativeness; in fact, she was never superabundant in animal spirits. Mrs. Crosby having, after diagnosis, made up her mind that her daughter was over-sentimental, had been prompted to present to Dorothy, with a greater force than she would have done otherwise, the desirability of being more like other people, — of being practical. Not even after the ugly duckling had lessened the maternal solicitude, by force of a charming transformation, did Mrs. Crosby see any reason to alter her opinion. She thought she understood the girl completely, and flattered herself that her hints and nagging, as the victim called it, had done much to effect the evolution in question.

Dorothy had brought away from school beliefs

that were simple and innocent. The scheme of ethics upon which her conscientiousness had expended itself was of a comparatively primitive order. The world, she had come to consider, was a place where men and women had been put to fit them for existence in a future state. To be unselfish, and eager to do all the good one could, seemed to her the most natural thing possible. Why men committed crimes, why they were sinful, or even idle, was quite incomprehensible to her. There was so much to do in life, and the time was so short in which to do it. Christ had died to save men from their sins; and were they not willing to live righteously for his sake? *She* would do so at least; *she* would prove herself worthy, so far as mortal was able, of the great atonement.

What she was going to do had not been precisely clear to her; but the doubt had never entered her mind but that the path would be evident enough. It might be beset with temptations; but were not faith and conscience proof against the subtlest snares? The way for men was simpler perhaps; but woman's missions, if more humble, were none the less of service.

Side by side in her breast with these pure aspirations, had nestled delightful hopes and imaginings regarding the social world where she was shortly to figure. She had grown to look forward to a brilliant career in society as a natural phase in a woman's destiny. >The thought that she was only one of a small minority of the earth's inhabitants

who spent their youth in such a manner did not occur to her ; or if it did, she dwelt upon her good fortune, and contrasted it pityingly with the general misery. The doubts and wonderings as to whether she should enjoy herself, — the vague but blissful dreams of conquests and adventures, of ideal admirers whose very suggestion caused her to blush in the dark, — had become her constant and absorbing companions. The thought of doing otherwise than those among whom she had been brought up never presented itself to her. To come out was a part of the ordinary sequence of a maiden's days.

So from guileless girlhood she had glided into real life ; and the first experience of the same had been even sweeter than anticipation, — sweeter and yet different. The visions and fancies had scarcely fulfilled themselves in the ways she had imagined ; but the entrancement of reality was an intoxicating substitute. The admiration of men of flesh and blood flattered her, even while she wondered at its diversity from what she had pictured in her maiden musings. She had been captivated by the delightful experience of becoming acquainted with her own powers, by the exquisite novelty of being sought and courted. With open, yet dazzled eyes, as in a delicious trance, she had let herself be swept along by the current of this strange, new existence.

But of late a sense of awakening had come over her, — not an abrupt and disagreeable experience, but, as it were, a slackening of the cord's tension, a

gentle restoration to consciousness. The proportions of things were assuming more of a normal condition, and there seemed to be some chain of connection between the new life and the old. And yet, though painless, this coming back to reality was far from a return to the former status. In the past few months she appeared to have lived years, and, like the Sleeping Beauty in the fable, had awaked to find herself the same, and yet different. The mirror of fancy upon which she had breathed as a child, and traced with facile finger conceptions beautiful and fantastic as frostwork, had been wiped clean by the unfaltering hand of experience, and to-day she saw therein but the reflection of her own fair face. Puzzled and bewildered, uncertain and dismayed, she was confronting life's reality, and bending on its mystery the strength of her keen, honest intelligence and pure heart.

She lay on the outside of her bed that night, after the conversation with her mother, her head resting upon her clasped hands, thinking. Her mental glance sped, with the swiftness common to woman, wide over the field of human speculation, touching with thirsty inquiry on the dearest interests of mortality. What did it all mean? What was the purpose of it all? What relation was there between the strange yearnings with which she thrilled at times, and the bustling world that roared about her on every side? She too was one of the dwellers upon earth, and she must play her part in the struggle of life. Her part, — what was her

part? As she pondered, a vivid sense of the incongruity between the simple faiths of her childhood and the actual sphere of her activity came over her. Whisperings of such a kind had been heard by her often of late, and they would not be put aside, as she in the plenitude of her happiness perhaps would fain have put them aside. What was she living for? What was she trying to become, — seeking to be?

She thought of her daily life, — of the balls and thousand and one gayeties she enjoyed so keenly, of the constant round of pleasure and excitement. She delighted in them. Oh, yes, they gave her so much happiness. But what was it all leading to? What was the sense of it all? Was this the part she was put upon earth to play? What did she do in the course of the week that was useful, — that helped to smooth the axle of the great world to which she belonged? She took a few lessons in music; she made an occasional flying visit to a sick friend; she tore from street to street to pay formal society calls; she went to lunch luxuriously with a bevy of girls; and at night she sallied forth to dinner and the german. There was the programme. On Sundays she went to the church, and, kneeling, vowed at the altar of the true Lord to live "a godly, righteous, and sober life." How grim a mockery, and how cruel a satire! Her thin lip curled with the biting consciousness of the irony.

Ah, yes! But what was she to do? Life was real. Life was practical. She had come to be

what she was, and had been placed where she was, without her own agency or control. If she were to change her habits, and renounce all these pleasant things, what should she do? Society, after all, must exist and calls must be made. Girls must be introduced to the world, and how except through the medium of entertainments? The ways were doubtless exaggerated, the methods mistaken; but what was she to do if she did not accept them? People already considered her romantic, and even peculiar. Her mother until lately had looked upon her as somehow deficient, and now that she was enjoying the triumph of success, was she to renounce it all? Ah, no! But still, was this the purpose of life? Was there no better aim or ambition than this?

With the fatality of her situation staring her in the face like a huge wall of granite, — or, rather, like a dense mist into which her aspirations plunged and lost themselves, — Dorothy, forced back to earth, turned her reflections by degrees elsewhere. Together with these earnest, serious questionings, she was aware of a sense of dreamy pleasure that hovered about her, and associated itself with this new life. What was it? What did it mean? Wherefore did all this admiration and attention excite her so greatly? It was marvellously agreeable. But what was the sense of it? Where would it end? It *did* excite her; ah, yes, it *did* excite her. And why? She closed her mental eyes, and lulled herself for a moment in this sweet but unfamiliar consciousness. Then, — slowly, and with

the frightened sideway glance of the miser who goes to unearth his hoarded treasure, the existence of which he would, if questioned, indignantly deny, — she opens her eyes to gaze upon a face that has glided half unbidden into her vision. Turning her head first, as it were to make sure that no one is looking, she darts a stealthy, frightened glance at her secret. Breathless and timid, she examines it with furtive scrutiny, as if she feared lest such inspection were not quite right, or some hidden peril attended her curiosity. Her heart beats oppressively, and, terrified at last by its very fascination, she shuts her eyes again, to banish the intruder. She has seen nothing, — oh, no! she has seen nothing. Even to herself she whispers, “I have seen nothing;” and she clasps her hands in the joy of her deliverance; or is it the unuttered, unacknowledged consciousness of her discovery? This is certain, at any rate, that Mr. Arthur Remington’s visiting-card — the one that accompanied the bouquet he sent Miss Dorothy Crosby for the Idlewolds’ ball — lies concealed in a secret corner of her writing-desk.

VII.

LENT had come, and the back of the winter and the winter's gayety were broken together. There was no visible alteration in the external aspect of the great city ; but in certain hearts were to be found signs of a profound veneration for the season, evidenced by a careful discrimination between dining out and going to the german, — or, indeed, dining out where the number of the guests was six and where it was twelve. “I draw the line on talking-parties,” said Miss Lawton. “I go to them, Mr. Remington, and don't see any harm. Do you ?” Now, on the principle of the young lady who gave up butter during the holy period, because sacrifice did not count unless you renounce something you really liked, Miss Lawton was way off, as the saying is ; for talking-parties were decidedly her element, and especially as Mrs. Fielding set a very high standard in this respect. The latter lady did not go out anywhere. She put her foot down so firmly as even to feel obliged to give up dining with her own sister. The only diversion she permitted herself was the five-o'clock tea she had spread for such of her friends as were inclined to drop in.

This lull in general gayety was theoretically much of a boon to Remington and Stoughton, who were both beginning to wince somewhat under the strain of such a busy existence. Now they would have plenty of time to read in the evenings ; and visions of a comfortable easy-chair close to the blazing hearth arose before them. They were each a little inclined to moralize on the waste of time that parties really were, and to vow they would cut all that sort of thing another winter. Dinners were, after all, the most satisfactory form of entertainments. One could talk to the right person without interruption. Of course the right person was here a decidedly necessary premise to enjoyment ; but then a discerning hostess was apt to arrange her guests with a deference to social whippers. They were beginning to be rather frequently invited to quiet little affairs of this sort. A winter had tended to develop them amazingly in the line of conversational powers and ease of manner. Stoughton's natural power of attraction was made more prominent through a greater fluency and a certain audacity of speech. People described him as a handsome creature. He had gained some flesh too, — just enough to fill out without impairing his figure. Remington also had made much progress in the way of becoming a favorite. He no longer was obliged in society to have recourse to the acting of Neilson, or the *status quo* of winter sports, to fill up a hiatus in conversation.

The hoped-for repose of Lent was little short of

a delusion, as Remington, at least, shortly found. His cherished schemes for improving himself, and doing some solid work in the evenings, proved terribly abortive. The time slipped away about as fast as ever, and he felt none the less driven. Unlike Stoughton, he did not seem to flourish on the racket, as he styled it, that he had been pursuing. He was conscious of a tired, strained sensation. It seemed to him as if he could never quite catch up with himself. He looked thin, and as though he drew on his vitality unsparingly.

He went to a doctor and consulted him regarding his condition. "You are a bundle of nerves," responded the leech, as a summary of the situation; and he proceeded to deliver Arthur a sensible homily on the advantages of moderation, illustrating his theme by examples taken from mechanics. A small engine, he said, could not do the work of one that was ninety-horse power. There was nothing the matter, if Arthur would only take care of himself. His cough was simply symptomatic. Did he smoke? Cigarettes? Well, he had better cut himself off for a while. Medicine? No; there was no need of medicine. Still, perhaps influenced by the young man's glum look at this announcement, he gave him a tonic, to be imbibed before every meal, which comforted Arthur's mind somewhat.

"You think too much. You take life too seriously," said Stoughton, who noticed his friend's brow. And indeed Remington did spend a good deal of time in puzzling over all sorts of matters

connected with the problem of living. First of all, Miss Crosby had come to be the central figure of his thoughts. He was in love with her, and the prospect of his being in a position where he would be justified in asking her to marry him seemed very remote. As to what her feelings toward him might be he was quite at sea. There was no doubt that Ramsay Whiting was extremely devoted to her. He frequently found Stoughton, too, beside the little tea-table when he went to call. Stoughton's way of saying things appeared to fascinate her. She frequently spoke of his cleverness to Remington. But then Stoughton was said to be as good as engaged to Isabel Idlewild.

There had come a lull in the law business also. Sundry bills for flowers and other little extravagances began to pour in about this time, and Remington found hard work in meeting them. The income from his pittance of a property, even including a small profit from his speculations, was lamentably small. What made it more irksome to have to be so economical was the success of Stoughton, who even drove a Tilbury on the proceeds of his winter's dabbling in the stock market. The latter confided to Remington that he had cleared twenty thousand dollars which he intended to salt down. "If you had only followed my advice," he said to his friend, "you might have done just as well. I gave you points enough."

This was perfectly true ; but the difficulty was, Remington could not make up his mind to take the

necessary risks. Despite the specious argument that the money was his own, he could not help feeling it was wrong to speculate. To be sure, the force of that word "wrong" was a little hard to determine nowadays. Wrong toward whom? It certainly did seem as if only those who were unlucky lost caste by speculation. All about him were instances of men who had made large fortunes in a very short period.

There was Eugene Finchley, for example. It was said that he and his partners had realized an enormous profit by floating the bonds of a new Western railroad. That was not speculation exactly. It was presumably merely in the line of their regular business, for they were bankers. But the result of the thing was the same. It was the making of a vast sum in a comparatively short space of time that attracted him. It seemed so desirable to be well off. He heard it often said that it was impossible to be prominent in New York unless one had a million.

But though all this made Remington despondent at times, he stuck pretty steadfastly to his principles and ideals, at least theoretically. He knew well enough that there were better things than mere money-getting, and when he acted on a contrary basis, he felt uncomfortable. He was put into the world to do useful work, and it was not very difficult to see that in many ways his life was far from what it ought to be. However uncertain he might be as to precise articles of faith, he was

sure that he was responsible to some higher power for his actions. He wanted to contribute his share to the labor of the world.

And so, despite occasional spells of idleness and discouragement, he did some hard work on the treatise on Railroad Law during the spring and summer. He spent most of the hot weather in the city, running down for an occasional Sunday with his family, who were at the sea-side. He took a vacation of three weeks in August, which he spent at Newport, for Miss Crosby was there. He found as much going on in the way of gayety as in winter, and rather against his will accepted invitations for dinners and dances. Woodbury Stoughton had been there all summer, and looked the picture of handsome health in his white flannel suit. His face was tanned a becoming brown. He was one of the leading spirits of the place and a crack tennis-player. He meant to go in for polo another year, so he told Remington, whom he looked up at the hotel soon after his arrival.

"You ought to have let me know you were coming, and I'd have engaged you a room at my house. I could have got you one three days ago, but they're all taken now. Ramsay Whiting and I have got first-rate lodgings together. You ought to have come down before, my dear fellow, instead of stewing in town. You look white as a ghost."

The three weeks slipped away fast enough, but Remington did not return to New York in an altogether equable frame of mind. He had not

been able to see nearly so much of Miss Crosby as he hoped. She was overburdened with engagements, and with the exception of a walk on the cliffs one Sunday afternoon his interviews with her were very fragmentary. He met her at a dance or two, and played tennis in the same party; but he found himself put in the background by the other young men, with whom she seemed to have more in common, for he was necessarily ignorant of the current jokes and chit-chat.

The Sunday walk, however, was very delightful. They strolled along the path that skirts the green lawns overlooking the sea, and, climbing down, sat upon the rocks. Miss Crosby inquired about the progress of his Treatise, the existence of which she was aware of. He philosophized a little; they discussed several books, and stayed gazing at the sunset until it was necessary to hurry to reach home before dark.

Miss Idlewild was much admired this summer. She drove a pair of agile graceful ponies, and she took Remington out in her phaeton one afternoon two days after his walk with Miss Crosby. She looked lovely in her dark blue close-fitting suit with a billycock hat and a bunch of pansies at her throat. Remington felt quite proud to be at the side of the young beauty. People still said Stoughton was going to marry her. Then, too, Finchley was at the hotel. He had been there three or four days. Town was hot, he said, and business dull. Remington had sat up with him smoking the night

before, talking about business. There would be a crash some of these days, Finchley said. Stocks were selling for all they were worth.

Remington found it rather difficult to converse with Isabel, if he left the field of badinage. She evidently enjoyed compliments while protesting against them. They got on famously when they talked sheer nonsense; but if he ventured to introduce more serious topics, she became embarrassed and silent. She was an excellent whip, and took a keen interest in her ponies, which were a birthday gift from her father.

She had turned Dandy's and Dewdrop's heads homeward. The sun had just set, and the western horizon was streaked with deep violet hues, suggesting the near advent of autumn. Remington was pensive under the influence of the evening light, and — a somewhat ungracious proceeding, it must be confessed — looking his gift horse in the face; for he said to himself that in spite of all her money, Miss Idlewild would be no wife for him. He liked her very much, but his idea of marriage was that a woman should be a companion to her husband. It must be a fine thing, though, to have a million, he reflected, as a criticism on this conclusion.

"Ain't it lovely!" exclaimed Isabel. "Just look at that cloud."

"It looks like a dragon with four heads. See, one of them is dropping off now. Do you remember the verses of —"

He stopped short for an instant and made a little swallow. Miss Idlewild laughed. She turned toward him, —

“Are you stopping because you forgot yourself and thought you were talking to some one else? Please continue, and imagine I am literary. I really think I should like poetry if some one would educate me. Go on, Dewdrop;” and she gave a little touch of the lash to the off pony.

Remington laughed nervously. “I forgot the lines. I thought I saw a ghost in the hedgerow, and it frightened me so they have slipped my memory.”

There was more truth than fiction in this speech; for as the phaeton passed one of the side streets that intersect Bellevue Avenue, his eye had recognized Dorothy Crosby and Woodbury Stoughton sauntering together. The twilight had thrown them into perfect relief.

“A ghost? what fun!” cried Isabel, all unconscious of his meaning.

“Yes; a ghost that boded no good either to you or to me.”

The girl laughed and looked again at her companion. “How queer you are to-night! Your tone then was positively sepulchral. What did it look like?”

“Miss Idlewild, let us elope,” he said, with a sudden burst of sprightliness, as of one who sweeps away the fumes before his eyes.

“Certainly. Let it be this very evening.”

They both laughed gleefully, and an instant later the noise of the wheels upon the gravel path told them that their drive was at an end.

Remington returned to the hotel in a state of excitement which he was conscious would soon settle into gloom. On the veranda he encountered Finchley, who carried an overcoat across his arm.

"What! Are you going back to-night? Hold on until to-morrow and I'll go with you."

"I can't. There's been a bad break in the market. It has come even sooner than I expected. Scioto Valley has dropped ten points since yesterday."

"Pheugh!"

At the moment Stoughton came up, swinging his cane. He appeared very good-humored, and remarked that the pair looked grave as owls. "What's the good word?" he said.

"Look here, Stoughton." Finchley put his hand through the other's arm and walked him aside.

"The devil!" Remington heard his friend ejaculate.

"You know I told you not to buy at those prices," said the broker; and he waved his hand at the driver of the omnibus. "I'm off."

Stoughton stood whipping his cane against the leg of his trousers. "This is a nice thing to have happen at the height of the season."

"Are you stuck badly?" asked Remington.

"It isn't as deep as a well nor as wide as a church door, but it's enough," he growled. "I

was a fool, as Finchley says. It's only two thousand," he added presently. "I bought a couple of hundred Scioto Valley for a turn last week, and it has gone the wrong way."

"Tough luck." Remington did not feel quite so sympathetic as if the afternoon's episode had not been in his mind. Besides, he had a little Scioto Valley himself. Everything seemed to be going wrong.

They both returned to New York on the following day. The break in the market was only temporary. Even Scioto Valley recovered a large portion of its decline. But Remington sold his out at nearly the lowest point it touched. He was afraid to hold any longer, for it might go all to pieces, his broker said. He did not like to run the risk of falling into debt. This loss made a sad hole in his capital. Two thousand dollars was all he had left. He made the resolution, however, that he would never buy stocks on a margin again. He would trust to his profession for his income in future.

"I pulled through that racket pretty well," said Stoughton, a month later. "I sold my Scioto Valley to-day, and my whole loss is only four hundred, including interest. I'm going to the caucus to-night. Come ahead. There's likely to be some sport."

"I was intending to go," answered Remington. "Ramsay Whiting was in my office this morning. He said the Independents were going to make every effort to prevent the election of Collamore delegates."

"H'm! They'll find it no easy matter. Corny French is a pretty hard customer to deal with. The trouble with Ramsay Whiting is that he's so impractical. There's no use in going into politics with kid gloves on, I've made up my mind. You've got to fight the beggars with their own weapons."

Woodbury Stoughton had flattered himself that in going into politics his motives were disinterested; that is to say, he believed any ambition he might feel for personal distinction to be quite subsidiary to his desire to promote the cause of reform in public life. It seemed to him that the intervention of the better classes was necessary to repress the corruption and debasement of tone which threatened to honeycomb our system of government. He was going to devote his energies to advocating pure methods and blocking the wheels of machine rule. For the pursuance of this object he was desirous to hold office, but he would never make use of any but the most unexceptionable and straightforward measures to advance his own interests.

It was in this spirit he had originally attended the primaries in his ward. The germ of the evil was said to lie here. Let good citizens take pains to be present at these meetings, and the monster could be strangled in the cradle.

His hopes had been, however, a little dashed, and his vanity somewhat wounded, by his first experiences. The sense of helplessness a novice realizes at an ordinary wardroom gathering is

almost pathetic. The clockwork regularity with which everything is done suggests the neat, exquisite movement of a machine, which receives at one end a commodity in the staple and reproduces it at the other in the textile. His presence seemed absolutely futile. He might just as well have stayed at home. A small clique of men, whose names were completely unfamiliar to him, appeared to run everything to suit themselves ; while the mass of the constituents, as they were styled from the platform, lounged and smoked in gaping indifference. Occasionally some disappointed aspirant, whose name had been omitted from the printed ticket supplied by the committee, would denounce the cut-and-dried condition of affairs, only to be rolled and trampled in the dust by a wheel as inexorable as Tarquinia's. Every few years the so-called respectable element of the district — roused by a scandal of more than ordinary proportions, or whipped into line through the persistency of some would-be candidate for preferment — turned out in force and filled the wardroom to overflowing. Then there were speeches made and resolutions passed, and read by a chairman of blameless character, calling for the systematic co-operation of the voters against the wire-pulling of the politicians ; while the gentry in question, already foreseeing the calm certain to follow this outburst of enthusiasm, suffered the movement to have its head, and even added their own testimony to the worthiness of the cause.

As is commonly the case, the ingredients that went to make up the constituency to which Stoughton belonged were various. In the first place, there were the well-to-do and educated, who were many of them vastly indifferent to their rights of suffrage. At the other antipodes were the poor and ignorant folk, who possessed little else but their votes upon which to raise money. Between them lay that great middle-class, to whom orators delight to appeal as the bone and sinew of the American people,—the class whose standards must, under republican institutions, determine largely the standards of the nation. This last element held the balance of political power, and while deprecating anything that could be construed into out-and-out dishonesty, was disposed to pardon much to a smart man. In other words, they were not thin-skinned. When matters became notorious—which was another way of saying “when they began to lose money”—they arose in their might and made a clean sweep of the slate; but for the most part they took things easily, and believed in supporting at the polls men who would never feel ashamed of them. Finally, there were the politicians pure and simple; which, if we take the words in the ordinary sense, was about the last term that could properly be applied to them.

“We shall never get pure government in this country,” Ramsay Whiting observed to Stoughton at one of their civil-service gatherings, “until the moral tone of the average voter is raised. When

the masses begin to understand why it is not respectable for an office-holder to use his place to supply his friends with comfortable berths, we shall see an improvement. As it is, they no more look for squeamishness in such matters than they expect to get full weight at a country grocery. In regard to cracking a bank or embezzling trust-funds the popular sentiment is generally sound ; but short of these they are not inclined to judge a ready speaker too harshly." The only thing to be done, he went on to say, was one's self to fight the evil, and trust to time to leaven the lump. Every little helped.

By degrees Stoughton had made the acquaintance of the leading politicians in his ward ; and it had surprised him to find what a decent lot they were, compared to his expectations. To be sure, his preconceived ideas on the subject had pictured the genus in question as a kind of human vulture,—a groggy, seedy individual who, when he was not plundering the public till, haunted pothouses and kindred resorts. However apt this diagnosis may have been regarding the lower strata of the profession, it certainly did great injustice both to the Honorable Cornelius French and Mr. Alderman Dunn.

To-night was to be one of the most important primaries of the year. A Republican candidate for the Assembly were to be nominated, although nomination in this district was not always equivalent to an election. Delegates were to be selected also for the convention shortly to meet to choose

a United States Representative. The Honorable Hugh Collamore, who had already served two terms in the State Senate, was anxious for the office, and his nomination would have been regarded as a certainty had it not been for the opposition of the civil-service wing of the party. This reform element had endeavored, though unsuccessfully, to defeat Collamore at the polls last year; but the attempt had rendered the contest so close that the managers were putting their heads together to try and patch up matters. If the Reformers were to go over to the Democrats, it would be a serious affair. They must be humored in some way, or, better still, set at variance among themselves.

Ramsay Whiting was one of the leading members of the Civil Service Reform Club. His labors in this direction rivalled even his devotion to his farm. He was the ruling spirit of the organization in his own district. Remington and Stoughton had signed the constitution, and enrolled themselves as aiders in the good cause, almost immediately after coming to New York. Stoughton had been, the previous autumn, among the bitterest opponents of Collamore's nomination. But when it had come to election day, and it was evident that there was no chance for Mr. William Webster, the Reform candidate, Stoughton showed his common sense, as he said, and worked for Collamore against the regular Democrat, who was likewise an arrant politician.

"It's a choice of evils; but Collamore's the better man," was his remark to those who inquired

as to the merits of the candidates. "There's no use in voting for Webster ; he's got no chance, and it will be merely a waste of your ballot."

Whiting had endeavored to remonstrate with Stoughton. The Independent candidate was an unexceptionable nomination, he said, and respectable people, by scratching Mr. Collamore's name, could teach the party a valuable lesson. Next year they would not be in such a hurry to put up a second-rate man.

"But don't you see, my dear fellow, it won't do any good to vote for Webster?" protested Stoughton, with some irritation. "You can't possibly elect him, and the result will be merely that that beggar Holmes will get in. He's worse than six Collamores, and is a Democrat to boot. You're cutting the throat of your own party."

"Exactly, if you choose to put it that way. I don't consider myself bound by any party ties to vote for an inferior candidate ;" and Whiting turned on his heel.

Collamore, meeting Stoughton in the street a few days later, had greeted him cordially. Without thanking the young man in express terms, he declared himself greatly indebted for the efforts of the friends to whom he owed his election. Stoughton felt considerably flattered, and went on to say how glad he was that the Democratic candidate had been beaten. "Well, sir," answered the politician, with an air of disgust that was not without pity, "it's not becoming perhaps in me to say it,

but he's a poor lot. I would sooner cut off this right hand"—and here he shook his fat fingers within an inch of the other's nose in his virtuous indignation—"than resort to the tricks which that Holmes practised to try to get an election. Why, sir, the fellow's hirelings violate the sanctity of the home in their attempts to buy votes. It was disgusting, simply disgusting!" and the speaker looked as if the purchase of a freeman's suffrage was something against which his very nature rebelled.

"And who is talked of for the Assembly next fall?" inquired Stoughton, presently.

Mr. Collamore was not sure that any names had been prominently mentioned in that connection. Young Finchley was a rising man, and was likely to be returned from one of the city districts. "Would n't you like to go yourself, Mr. Stoughton?"

Stoughton was not sure that he would not. "If the party would like to have me serve, I shall be very glad of the nomination," he continued.

"Well, we'll see,—we'll see if it can't be managed," said the politician, thoughtfully.

The latter had referred to the subject on several occasions since, and Stoughton had come to regard himself in the light of a possible candidate. He had already made sure of the support of the Reformers. At a meeting of the executive committee of the club held a week ago it had been agreed to run him for Assemblyman, and Talboys Dewitt, an intelligent young banker, for Congress, on one ticket, and to oppose the Collamore candidacy.

Two days before the present caucus secret overtures had been made to Stoughton to the effect that a compromise was desirable. The political element would assure Stoughton the nomination for the Assembly if his friends would support Finchley for the other vacancy and vote for Collamore delegates. There was no chance for both the Civil Service men, and by a refusal to settle matters amicably the chances were much in favor of neither of them getting the nomination. This argument of the envoy sent on behalf of the other side was represented as worthy of consideration by Stoughton to Ramsay Whiting, to whom, without revealing that he had been approached, he suggested the possible advantage of some such move. But the young Reformer was steadfast in his determination to avoid bargaining with the enemy. If the consequence was defeat, at least they could say they had been faithful to their principles. Stoughton had shaken his head incredulously. His reply to the messenger of the other faction was that perhaps something might be done on the night itself.

Remington and Stoughton entered the ward-room together, which was crowded with men standing in little knots, smoking. There were a number at the door armed with printed tickets which bore various headings, such as "Regular Republican Nominations," "Straight Republican Ticket," and the like.

"Holloa!" said Remington, glancing over one

of the ballots, "they've got your delegates on the Collamore ticket, Wood."

"Is that so?" replied Stoughton.

They walked forward to the middle of the room. "Ah! Mr. Stoughton, how d'y' do?" said one of the ward politicians, a tall individual with a sonorous voice, the distinguishing points of whose dress were a long black frock-coat and a black whisk tie. "Mr. French," he continued, turning to a portly man with a round, red, sphinx-like face, and glittering pig's eyes sunk in a wealth of fat, "I want to introduce to you a young friend of mine, one of the new men of the party. Mr. Stoughton — Honorable Cornelius French."

"I am happy to meet you, sir," said the great man, taking the neophyte's hand in his, while he scrutinized his face with a keen glance; "I thought I was acquainted with all the rising political talent."

"I belong to the youngsters," said Stoughton, with a laugh.

"So do I, sir, so do I," protested Mr. French, with a mock gesture of deprecation; "I am not to be classed with the antiquities yet."

"Mr. Stoughton is the young man of whom I was speaking to you the other day," the henchman went on to observe. "As I was just saying to these gentlemen," and he turned towards the group, "we are determined to send clean men to the Assembly next time."

"Quite right, sir, quite right. The country

demands that the public servants should be worthy of their trust." Mr. French gravely passed a blue silk handkerchief over his smooth chin.

Corny French, as he was styled in political circles, was a remarkable character. He was primarily a self-made man ; which, in his case, was largely associated with the fact that he had always looked out for himself before everything and everybody else, — even including the grand old party to which he belonged, and of which he was one of the mainstays. He was one of the powers behind the political throne, one of those personages who, like the manipulator of a puppet-show, handle the wires invisible to the ordinary eye. Originally a journalist, he had obtained, as the reward of a spicy advocacy of a successful candidate, office under the New York City government. Thence he had eaten his way deep into the municipality. Few in public life had been brought so intimately into contact — or rather into contract — with the civic needs, in the line of lamps, sewers, and pavements, as himself. He was an alderman for a number of years, and later figured as a legislator in both branches at Albany. He could have been sent to Congress at any time, had he so desired ; but it suited his ambition better to say who should not go, than to go himself. Political manipulation was the dearest interest of his life. There was to-day no cleverer party manager in the country than the Honorable Cornelius French. He had grown literally gray in the service ; and there was many

a politician who was indebted, for his subsequent notoriety, to the favor shown him at the start by this modern Warwick. From the enormous circulation of his newspaper he had realized a handsome fortune, and he lived in luxury. His private tastes and accomplishments indicated a mind of no mean order. He was an omnivorous consumer of books, and could read with pleasure, it was stated, six different languages. His library was among the choicest in the city. He was said to be an intimate student of the English poets. He had never been accused of personal pilfering of the public money.

Just then Ramsay Whiting came up and drew Remington aside. "See here, what does Stoughton mean by letting his name appear on the opposition ticket? It was agreed that he and Dewitt should run together."

"So I thought. You'd better ask him."

But Stoughton had slipped away, and presently there went a whisper round the room to vote the split ticket. Despite the efforts of Whiting, who buttonholed Reform men and urged the importance of avoiding compromise, the general sentiment seemed to be confused. Somebody had started the watchword that by meeting the politicians half-way more would be gained for the cause than by suffering total defeat.

"I say, Stoughton, you ought to get up and decline to run except on the same ticket with Dewitt," said Remington, seeking out his friend.

"It is n't my fault that they've put my delegates

on their ticket. If I should do that, neither Dewitt nor I would have a ghost of a chance."

"Well, I shall have to vote against you then."

"All right. Just as you please."

The politician in the frock-coat, who was the Honorable Hugh Collamore's chief fogleman, was standing near by with Finchley. "It will be a walk-over. They've swallowed that bait pretty solid."

"Yes, and don't let on," Finchley whispered behind his hand, "but I've got the whole kit of their ballots, except about twenty, wrapped up in my ulster. One of the daisies put them behind the bench for safe keeping, and I cabbaged them."

It was plain sailing after this. In the midst of the noise and chatter one of the ward committee knocked the meeting to order and called for nominations for a chairman. A big fellow, with a voice like a Bashan bull, got up, and after looking around him, as much as to say that he would wipe up the floor with any one who should gainsay him, proceeded to make a motion that Mr. Alderman Dunn act as the chairman of this meeting. Remington, who was in a state of much excitement, started to his feet and nominated Honorable William Webster. The meeting was desired to express its choice by a show of hands. The vote stood: Dunn, 97; Webster, 85. Stoughton, who had voted for Webster, arose and urged that Mr. Dunn's nomination be made unanimous.

Mr. Dunn, while in a sitting posture, had the

effect of being without a neck. His square, heavy-jawed countenance, smooth-shaven and furrowed with seams, appeared to rest directly upon his broad shoulders after the manner of a snow-image fashioned by boys. He had an expansive smile, and a confidential, caressing manner, which was intended to be very ingenuous,—as if to imply that whatever secrets one might intrust to him would go no further. His person was ordinarily redolent of jockey-club,—a peculiarity which was easily accounted for, however. Mr. Dunn was in everyday life a dealer in horses, and, it having been intimated to him that the flavor of the stables was disagreeable to his associates, he had endeavored to obviate the difficulty by the use of scent. The choice of jockey-club was only an accident; so he explained to Stoughton, who came upon him one day in the municipal dressing-room, sprinkling himself from a small bottle; it might just as well have been patchouly, or any other perfume. He had not intended to pun upon his occupation. And then he had laughed hoarsely, and rubbed the young man with his elbow, which was his way of suggesting that he had said a good thing. He was an alderman at present, and reputed to be one of the shrewdest workers in the party.

He now ascended the rostrum, and two secretaries, one from each faction, having been chosen, he declared the meeting organized for business. There was some little confusion among the Reformers, owing to the mislaying of their ballots. Some

one called for a committee to nominate delegates, and an attempt was made to have distinct ballots for delegates to the Congressional and Assemblymen Conventions ; but, both these motions having been defeated, a vote was taken. The result was announced by the chairman.

He declared elected the list of Collamore delegates, who had received 121 votes to 61 for their opponents, and likewise the delegates in favor of Woodbury Stoughton for Assemblyman, whose majority was even larger, owing to his support from both factions. Upon the announcement of the result a loud shout went up, coupled with cries for a speech from the would-be Congressman, who at last suffered himself to be escorted to the platform. He was a ponderous-looking man, with coarse reddish hair and beard, and a hawk's eye and nose. He was arrayed in black broadcloth. From his showy watch-chain hung a Masonic emblem, and a large diamond pin spluttered in his shirt-bosom.

After a short preface of thanks for "the honor conferred," he proceeded to take the bull by the horns in saying that he had reason to believe that there were some who had come to the meeting for the purpose of sowing dissension in the ranks of the Republican party. He looked around the room, as he spoke, with an air of righteous indignation, amid cries of "That's so," "Give it to 'em, Hugh," "We'll teach 'em what reform means!" The air was blue with tobacco smoke, and the worst element evidently felt the inspiration of success.

"Gentlemen," the speaker continued, stimulated by the last interjection, "I have heard the word *reform* fall from the lips of some one in this assembly. Reform! Thank God, gentlemen," — and here he banged with his fist upon the desk, — "thank God I can stand up proudly in this place and say that if there is one thing I believe in and have striven for during the whole course of my political career, it is reform. Reform, gentlemen, reform, — the sacred beacon and watchword of our party, the golden hope of the political future and of the present, — ay, gentlemen, of the present, —"

"How about that Spuyten Duyvil Bridge job?" piped a voice at the back of the room.

The eyes of everybody were turned in the direction from which it had emanated, and seemed to centre on Ramsay Whiting, who was standing near the door with folded arms and a disdainful smile on his face. His ulster was drawn up about his ears, and he had been apparently on the point of taking his departure. There were loud cries of "Who was it spoke?" "Put him out!" and the like. The remark had not come from Whiting, but the crowd chose to consider him responsible for it; or at least the Honorable Hugh did, for, as he resumed his harangue, his finger was pointed unmistakably in his direction. "Some gentleman has made a remark," said he, and, as he paused dramatically, the whole company turned toward the young man. "Some gentleman has taken it upon himself to

make a remark which reflects upon my conduct as a public servant, and which calls in question my fidelity to the trusts that this constitoency has placed in my hands. I might, upon such an occasion as this, fitly decline to notice language so unparliamentary, but it has been my boast, gentlemen of the Republican party, since first I assumed the sacred garb of office, that I have been ever ready to submit my behavior to the light of scrutiny, — ay, gentlemen, to the scorching blaze of noon. The allusion that the honorable gentleman has seen fit to make is Cimbrian in its darkness, gentlemen, Cimbrian — ”

The orator paused to give due effect to what he considered, doubtless, an apt and correct classical allusion.

“ Let him stand forth and proclaim himself ! ”

There were loud cries of “ He dar’s n’t ! ” “ What’s his name ? ” and the like.

“ Let him no longer seek a cowardly shelter behind the rampart of the anonymous. I care not who he is, whether he be a lowly son of toil or one who haunts the gilded halls of aristocracy,” — and here he stopped and shook his fat finger menacingly at Whiting, — “ I proclaim him from this platform a base and perjured liar.”

Whiting made no reply. He simply looked amused ; and the Honorable Hugh, having, so to speak, placed himself on record, was evidently satisfied ; for after looking around for a moment, as if in search of some one to take up his gage, he went

on to say in a pathetic tone: "Perhaps, gentlemen, I may have been in error to consume your valuable time with matters of private moment. But" — and here he struck his chest with his fist — "no one, my fellow-citizens, from the poor but free-born tiller of the fields to the honored magistrate upon the bench, can afford to allow the foul breath of slander to sully the snowy bosom of his reputation, — his reputation, gentlemen, which, in the words of the immortal bard, outweighs the miser's gold."

He sat down, overcome by his feelings, amid vociferous applause, and the caucus was speedily adjourned. Stoughton went off with a number of jovial spirits to celebrate the occasion. He saw fit first, however, to invite Remington and Whiting, who were standing together, to join him.

"Arthur," said Stoughton, "let me introduce you to Mr. Alderman Dunn."

The alderman said a few words to the young men. He addressed Whiting with a show of deference. "We feel, Mr. Whiting, that the efforts of your association in the interests of good government should be recognized. Mr. Stoughton's name will add strength to the ticket. The people will see that the so-called politicians" — and here he smiled with the air of one who, though unjustly accused, is still patient — "are not wholly regardless of the public interests. I regret that you will not join us in a little something. Good-evening, gentlemen."

Whiting on the way home was severe in his criticisms upon Stoughton's conduct. If men of his

stamp did not take a high stand in such matters, what could one expect of the uneducated? He declared that after what had happened he could not vote for Stoughton. "I consider even that Finchley a less dangerous man, for I believe he acts up to his lights, and Stoughton does n't. I'm terribly disappointed in him. It was perfectly evident to-night that he slaughtered Talboys to save himself."

Remington was unable to say a word in his friend's defence. He felt that the latter had behaved badly. He had unquestionably sacrificed principle to his own private ambition. The young men shook hands cordially at parting. They had come of late to feel a mutual liking, notwithstanding their devotion to the same woman.

VIII.

IT was a beautiful summer day, late in August. The fog, that had for a week past enveloped Bar Harbor like a shroud, had rolled away, and the atmosphere, appropriate to a cloudless sky at this season, was tempered by a breeze fresh from the ocean.

One approaching this picturesque resort — more familiarly, though erroneously, described as Mt. Desert — cannot fail to be deeply impressed by the bold, rugged beauty of an immense pile of cliff known as Great Head, which lifts its broad flat surface to an unusual height above the level of the waters, and juts seaward from amid the lesser crags that line the iron coast, a huge sentinel.

Many hundred miles to the north, where the waters of the St. Lawrence River mingle with the Atlantic, stands another mammoth of the geological world, the Percé Rock. The incessant action of the wind and waves has divided the latter from the mainland, and further eaten into its solid centre an arched pathway, through which small skiffs can pass with safety when the sea is tranquil; but though its core is threatened, the superb crag

towers proudly, and, like its more familiar rival, raises to the cold heavens a broad expanse, where myriads of sea-birds find a resting-place secure from the invasion of man. Nought disturbs these feathered creatures save when an occasional steamer — the sole link uniting the inhabitants of the isolated gulf-ports, Percé, Paspébiac, and the beautiful Gaspé, with the outer world — rests for a little by the rock-bound village, and fires a gun athwart the startled twilight. Then in an instant, as by a touch of magic, the vast rock — which but just now, erect amid the waters and outlined against the evening sky, inspired the gazer by its silent, majestic beauty — wakes to life. Countless flocks of gulls and cormorants, disturbed by the unaccustomed din, start from their eyries with hoarse strident cries, and hover on wide-extended wing above the sea-girt pile. A small number, startled into more decided action, describe a short ponderous flight oceanwards or sail solemnly along the shores, and for a few minutes the air teems with the feathered tribe ; but as the sounds die away among the ancient hills, the birds settle once more on the familiar resting-place.

Although the geological formation is different, the boldness and wild, silent grandeur of Great Head awaken emotions kindred to those which the sight of the Percé Rock inspires. Little by little, as the steamer steals up the coast, the features of the giant crag define themselves, and the wondrous colors of the rugged stone are revealed to the

admiring eye. Civilization seems far remote. Nature, pure and simple, untrammelled, unrestrained, holds free court amid her silent worshippers.

The steamer passes close to the headland ; but the traveller, while still afar off, is puzzled as to the identity of sundry objects, at first mere specks, which become visible at frequent intervals along the level and down the face of the rocks. So motionless do these appear, that only on a near approach is it apparent that this citadel of nature is possessed by living creatures. By degrees it dawns upon the astonished senses that every sheltering ledge, every nook and comfortable recess, — from the broad top to the base line far beneath, rough with barnacles and slippery with weed, where the salt wave licks the feet of the unwary, — harbors a pair of human beings engrossed in the delights of intimate communion. With nothing apparently to interrupt their unfettered confidences, with the sky and ocean and grand old rocks as sole witnesses of what each may say to the other, is it strange that the shrill notes of the whistle breaking on the ear convey the first warning that they are no longer unobserved, and that earth claims them once more ? Then, as the vessel steams abreast of the vast promontory, from every airy niche along the shore, from every ledge that slopes toward the sea, and from behind boulders that guard the entrance to fascinating caves, handkerchiefs, hats, and gay sun-umbrellas wave back a joyous answering welcome, and eager eyes are strained upon the faces of the

new-comers. But the swift course of the steamer leaves them but little space in which to satisfy their curiosity. For a few short minutes query and comment absorb those upon the shore and those upon the sea. Then, as the vessel lapses into distance, the young people sink back upon the rocks, and resume the thread of interrupted discourse.

No man, it is believed, has ever quite gauged the cleverness of woman. Every now and then we flatter ourselves that we have come to the end of her resources, and hold her, figuratively speaking, in the hollow of our hand; when all of a sudden some new little device peeps out, as shyly as a violet from a hedgerow, to show us the folly of our pretension. It was always with a certain air of exultation, as of a consciousness of security from pursuit, that the hard-worked male of our great cities had fled to the trout streams and deer woods to spend his pitiful fortnight's vacation. His plea that the discomforts of the primeval forest are beyond the endurance of the gentler sex always seemed unanswerable. Yet mark the sequel! Woman, with a docility that should have awakened suspicion, appeared to accept the situation; but in secret she diligently cast about for an argument, until she had installed herself in an isle where all those health-giving properties for which her mate was clamorous were to be found in abundance, and the annoyances of an outlandish existence merely such as added a zest and piquancy to the circum-

stances. Here, assuming the garb of Diana the Huntress, she evinced herself prepared to woo the delights of nature and the unconventional. History repeats itself. We are all familiar with the fate of the too fond Samson, whose flowing locks grew less under the scissors of the artful Philistine. To-day, in many a sylvan grove and by the rock-bound sea, the hair of our strong men, closely clipped for the needs of summer, grows long again in the laps of maidens far cleverer than she.

Among those, the current of whose thought was broken in upon by the approach of the steamboat on this particular morning, were Arthur Remington and Miss Dorothy Crosby, who, having walked thither from the village after breakfast, — a pleasant tramp, — had now for several hours been ensconced in a sheltered nook. He had on a little round cap, a sack-coat over his tennis shirt, and knickerbockers. Her dress was of dark-blue flannel, the looseness of which was confined by a broadish leathern belt. About her neck she wore a white muslin scarf, nonchalantly tied, and the masses of her hair were surmounted by a wide-brimmed straw hat, perched on the back of the head, and bound with the same variety of muslin. Seated close to the water's edge, she was leaning back comfortably against the solid wall of rock, while Remington lay stretched out beside her on the sloping ledge. They were talking earnestly; and, as the interest deepened, he picked, with increasing nervous energy, with the point of Miss Crosby's red sun-

umbrella, at the barnacles that grew upon the rocks around him.

Another winter had slipped away without witnessing any material change in the circumstances of Remington. He had dug away at the law, and been rewarded by some little business, — nothing very important or lucrative, but sufficient to keep discouragement, which is quite as gaunt a wolf as hunger, from the door. His book on Railroads had been favorably received by the legal community, even if the profits of the author had not been considerable. He had been almost as frequent a patron of gayeties as the winter before; but nothing had come of this party-going beyond a deeper conviction than ever of his love for Dorothy Crosby, who was still unmarried, though a prime favorite. The attentions of Ramsay Whiting were unremitting, and people who had nothing better to do wondered whether she would take the unexceptionable young millionaire or that handsome Woodbury Stoughton, with whom she was seen sometimes tripping along the cross-streets. Woodbury Stoughton was in the legislature, and doing very well, every one said.

Remington had run down to Bar Harbor to spend the three weeks of vacation that he had allowed himself, leaving his office in the charge of a small boy, with directions to say, if any one called in the mean while, that he would return by the 15th of August. New York, even varied by an occasional afternoon at Coney Island or Sunday

on a yacht, was extremely hot and dull, and really there was nothing on earth to detain him at home. Woodbury Stoughton had gone to Newport again. Rumor still found material in his intimacy with Miss Idlewild. Miss Crosby was at Bar Harbor. She had gone down there the first week in July; and Remington had cause to believe that Ramsay Whiting's yacht had started recently in the same direction. He mechanically stretched out his hand for the newspaper. There would be a steamer from Boston to-morrow evening. He could catch it if he chose. He looked at his watch reflectively. "John," he exclaimed, with decision. "Yes, sir." "I am going away to-night, and may not be back for three weeks. If Mr. Phillips — that bald man with the sandy whiskers — comes in while I'm gone, his papers are on my desk."

On the way to his destination he had made several acquaintances, — notably a Miss Plumber from Philadelphia, who sat out with him in the moonlight, and discoursed on the affectation of persons who spelt her family name with an *m*, instead of a *b*. Was n't it absurd? *She* was not in the least ashamed herself because her ancestors might have been plumbers centuries ago. Remington had sat puffing his cigarette, and was very quiet. After Miss Plumber was gone to bed, — or had retired, as Miss Johnson, a spinster, who was chaperoning the young lady in question, called it, — he had walked the deck for some time in a pensive mood, now and again pausing to gaze out over the stern, beneath

which the churning waters of the wake lay silver-white in the moonshine. His thoughts were reminiscent, and he sought to analyze the experiences of the past six months. As always, the influence of the beautiful in nature affected him strongly. He turned his face up to the quiet skies as though he would fain pierce the riddle that balks the scrutiny of all. Hopes and strong resolutions for the future filled his breast; and, free for an instant from the pressure of material considerations, he let his fancy have full rein. His episode with Isabel Idlewild came back to him as an indifferent memory. His spirit seemed to soar, and reached itself out in an unqualified ecstasy toward her whom he hoped to see upon the morrow.

Remington was already tolerably familiar with the place and its customs. A new-comer to Bar Harbor is apt at first blush to be rather flattered by the numerous attentions showered upon him. Urgent solicitations to join picnics and the various expeditions which form a framework for romance, greet him upon every side. He finds himself speedily initiated into the mysteries of the closely packed buckboard,—and the sailing-party, picturesque with wraps, and haply a guitar. He is greatly in demand, and his name is ever on the lips of would-be entertainers. All this is pleasing to the novice; but as in the natural course of events he comes to make, among the young ladies whose acquaintance he has formed, those distinctions which render the presence of a third party

invidious, he ordinarily develops into an ardent disciple of the school who share the opinion that two in the woods are happier than three on a buck-board, — for let the uninitiated learn that each seat of this recognized vehicle of the neighborhood is fashioned to hold a triple freight. Then, by degrees, it grows obvious, even to himself, that for the sake of sequestered walks and talks with the beloved she, he is ready unblushingly to bluff, with the plea of a previous engagement, the hardest and most persistent of picnic organizers.

At the time of this expedition to Great Head, Remington had been at Bar Harbor about a month. He had overstayed his prescribed time by nearly a week. During this period he had managed to see a good deal of Miss Crosby. His lot, however, or rather his state of mind, had not been completely blissful; for Ramsay Whiting's yacht, and the poetizing tendencies of a Mr. Lattimer, who had also turned up here, were formidable distractions to his *innamorata*. Lattimer, in especial, had interfered with his plans. The young writer had lately produced a new volume of verses, and what woman is proof against the attraction of having a poet all to herself? Canoeing by moonlight with a bard, looks a great deal better than making the same trip with a layman. These water trips and other cast-iron expeditions (the term cast-iron symbolizing their complete exemption from interruption) were a favorite method of procedure with Remington; and it was galling to find a rival, who had such unusual

resources at command, ploughing with his heifer. He was handicapped from the start, he mournfully reflected. Sometimes, in desperation, he would affect, for a day or two, the society of the aforesaid Miss Plumber, who sang "Over the Garden Wall," and other ditties, to a banjo with a charming chirpiness. She was an audacious little person, and informed him one evening, as they were floating under the harvest-moon, at the respective ends of a canoe, that she preferred playing first banjo to second fiddle. Remington pretended not to understand the jest; but he took care, for the rest of the evening, not to let his eyes wander so much in the direction of another skiff that lay to leeward.

Nevertheless he had managed to be pretty assiduous in his attentions to Miss Crosby. He had become vastly more intimate with her in the course of their wanderings over the island, and it seemed to him as if he had confided to her his uttermost self. What she did not know about him was, as he would have phrased it, not worth knowing. Together they had probed the most interesting problems of human experience and destiny, and wandered at will over the delightful field of speculation. But time, which latterly had seemed to the young man as nought, now stood frowning in his rôle of taskmaster. It was necessary for Remington to sail away upon the morrow. This was to be his last interview with Miss Dorothy Crosby; and in truth, at the moment of their in-

terruption, he had been bewailing the harshness of his fate in this particular.

"Yes," he exclaimed moodily, as the steamer lapsed into distance, "such is life. Just as one is beginning to be thoroughly contented, 'comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears.' But there's no use in complaining; I'm obliged to go."

"I wish you could stay," said the girl. "We really have had a very pleasant time these past few weeks in our rambles, or rather scrambles, together, have n't we? Whatever people say, there's no place like Mt. Desert for getting to know one's fellow-creatures,—for seeing them in a pleasant way. In New York it always seems to me, somehow or other, as if I never get a moment's time to myself. We live in a perpetual whirl from morning to night; and as for seeing anything of one's friends, it's completely out of the question. Every one there keeps on the go until they are ready to drop."

"That's what we all do in America," replied Remington. "We live on our nerves through the winter, and when it thaws we pine and peak with the snow-piles." He was thinking of his own debilitated condition the preceding spring. In fact, he felt by no means rested now. He had kept up the pace pretty well since he had been down at Bar Harbor. "Do you know, comfortable as we both look stretched out here, I suppose that really it is all wrong. This luxury of limpness, this yearning for flannel-shirted Platonism, what are they but

protests of overtaxed nature? We overdo, and so in our leisure moments we shrink from upright attitudes and conventional costumes."

Miss Crosby was leaning lazily back, so that her head rested against the base of the cliff. Her arms were folded, and she was looking out over the sea. "A good many of us certainly do have the air of convalescents. Why," she continued after a pause, "do you say Platonism?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. Perhaps I was ambitious to be a little epigrammatic. I imagine," he continued, making a ferocious dab with the tip of the sun-umbrella at an obstinate barnacle, "what I meant was that when one feels debilitated and in a state of collapse, there is a tendency to grope after sympathy, just as one takes a tonic."

"That is, three times a day, before or after meals according to circumstances," said Dorothy, with a laugh.

"Precisely. This getting to know each other all to pieces, as we do down here, is, so to speak, a sanitary precaution. It props one up. It acts as a stimulant. Our systems have become so dependent upon excitement that if we renounced it altogether we should die, like the opium-eater suddenly deprived of his drug." He paused a moment. "And when the medicine has fulfilled its purpose you throw away the bottle," he said, with a tone that, though jocular, had a certain bitterness.

The girl, however, seemed not to notice the sudden introduction of the second person. "I am .

afraid that is what sometimes takes place. Don't you think, Mr. Remington," she asked, "the generation of to-day is dreadfully disposed to be contented, provided only it can amuse itself? It sometimes seems as if we, who have all the advantages of life, — at least the girls, — are brought up to go through the world reaching out our hands after happiness, just as a reckless person wanders through an orchard, breaking off apple-blossoms simply because they smell sweet."

"Only for apple-blossoms, read hearts."

"Hearts, and a great many other things, Mr. Remington," she replied, with a blush. "It isn't hearts alone. It's anything that caters to our yearning for excitement, that charms our love of the beautiful or the luxurious or the clever. Do you know, I believe that unrefined people are secretly more disturbing to my equanimity than bad people, and ugliness at times affects me to a degree that makes me ashamed. Somehow I seem to myself to be gliding down the river of life in a golden barge, — with lilies in my hair, and my senses steeped with music and the aroma of flowers, and all that is soft and delicious. I often think that all I live for is sensations. It is a dreadful thing to say one does n't care for people, but it comes over me occasionally that I'm heartless, or rather that I care for most human beings in the same way as I do for poems and symphonies and statuary; they appeal to my æsthetic sense, — in short, they cause me an emotion. While I am in

their presence I am fond of them ; if I cease to be with them they pass out of my mind."

As she spoke she gazed out to sea over the expanse of tranquil water, with the expression of intensity usual with her when absorbed. Remington looked up at her stealthily. He was endeavoring, as men are so apt to do in discussing the subjective with the other sex, to discover some allusion to himself in her words.

"I should say, you have a great deal of feeling," he protested earnestly.

Her glance still strayed dreamily oceanwards. Her bosom rose and fell as with the stimulus of interesting emotions. She clasped her hands together in her lap and sighed gently.

"Why do you sigh, Miss Crosby ?"

"Did I sigh ?" Her cheek flushed slightly, and she turned her eloquent eyes full upon him. "I don't know exactly why I did sigh, Mr. Remington." The color in her face deepened, as if either the ardor of the young man's glance had suddenly suggested to her the vicinity of peril, or she were mortified at the degree to which she had been led into uttering her secret thoughts. At any rate, she roused herself from her position and stood erect upon the ledge of rock. The breeze gently stirred some loosened bunches of her hair and the streamers of her jaunty hat. She shaded her eyes with her hand.

"How calm the sea is to-day ! Oh, look ! there is another yacht ! It is n't unlike the Culprit."

That was the name of Ramsay Whiting's sloop, and the reminder was scarcely pleasing to her lover, who still dallied in his recumbent attitude. His thoughts were coursing curiously. To one genuinely excited, the outline and proportions of things often present themselves to the mind with a distinctness analogous to that with which we behold material objects at sunset. There is a clearness in the brain at such times that resembles the crepuscular atmosphere. Impassioned as Remington was by his sudden determination to declare his love to Dorothy, — for he had, on leaving the hotel that morning, only a haunting suspicion of a design to take any such step, — he was still conscious of himself as an individual; that is to say, he could not help thinking of the language and attitude most befitting an avowal of this kind. With all his trepidation, he had leisure to recognize the absence of a spontaneity and suppleness he had supposed germane to proposals of marriage, and to deduce therefrom grim and caustic reflections regarding the methods of his ancestors. He was, in truth the victim of their philosophy of repression. His power of feeling intensely had been so far abridged and adulterated that he was unable to escape self-scrutiny in his most ardent moments. Determined as he was in his mind to ask Miss Crosby to become his wife, why should the arguments in favor of and against his action appear as distinct to his consciousness as Banquo's ghost to the guilty Macbeth?

"And so you are going back to-morrow to the law and liberty," said Dorothy; and she smiled with the satisfaction of one who is pleased at finding a half-truth in her alliterative and somewhat random speech. She resumed her seat, as if glad, now that she was on her guard, to return in a measure to their former ground. "It must be rather nice to be a man," she continued reflectively; "you all have such opportunities." She delayed a moment, and, picking up a pebble, tossed it from her hand and watched it bound from rock to rock into the sea beneath. "It's a strange world. I wonder if things puzzle men as much as they do girls. We seem, somehow, to skip through existence just like that stone, and our influence in life is about as wide as its paltry ripple." She leaned back, and, clasping her hands behind her head, bent her gaze on space from under her hat.

"Perhaps I have rather romantic ideas on the subject," he answered, with eyes cast down, and tapping gently on the ledge with the sun-umbrella. "Do you know, Miss Crosby," he continued in a low tone, "I think the men in this country are brought up to have a peculiar reverence for women. We look up to them somehow as higher and purer beings than we are. I believe a truly noble woman is the divinest thing in creation, and that she can raise the man who loves her, and whom she loves, up to those shining stars whose ministrant she is. That is her power; that is her mission." Remington spoke earnestly. Conscious as he was of his

words, he believed them with all his heart. "I've been rather an aimless fellow, I know; I don't suppose I amount to a great deal; but I've always clung to a faith in something ideal regarding love." He paused nervously. "Miss Crosby, I — I love you. Are you willing to become my wife?" He wanted to call her Dorothy, but he felt instinctively that he had no right to do so.

"Oh, Mr. Remington!" There was a deathly silence. Miss Crosby sat with her eyes on her lap, — the type, as it were, of hushed, demure contrition.

"I know," he exclaimed, in jerky sentences, "it's very premature. Of course I've no right to say anything of the kind on so short an acquaintance. But I could n't help it, Miss Crosby, indeed I could n't. These past few weeks have been the happiest of my life. I meant to go away without letting you know anything, but somehow or other the words escaped in spite of me."

"I'm perfectly aware," he went on presently, as the girl still remained motionless, save for a few sighs and slow shakings of the head, "it's impossible you can care for me. I'm a friend, — as you said the other day when we were at Duck Brook, — and the idea of any other relation has very likely never entered your mind. But I do love you so much!" And he leaned forward beseechingly, with a sudden impetuosity.

"I thought of you merely as a friend," she mur-

mured. "Oh, I'm dreadfully sorry, Mr. Remington. We were such good friends."

"Is it impossible, Miss Crosby?"

"I'm afraid so. Oh, yes, quite,—it's quite impossible."

Remington covered his face with his hands, and for several moments no word was spoken. She was the first to break the silence.

"I think I must be starting for home, Mr. Remington. It is getting late."

"I should like to ask one question," said Remington, with a dry, relentless accent. "Is there any one else that you care for? I mean, is there no chance for me because you like somebody else?"

"No," she answered quietly. "There is nobody else that I care for, I think."

Their walk to the village was silent and embarrassed. They halted at the steps of her hotel. "I suppose I had better say good-by now, Miss Crosby. We sail early to-morrow," he said a little stiffly.

"Good-by, Mr. Remington. I thought we were going to be such friends. But you will come and see me in New York, won't you?" and she held out her hand.

"I will try and do so, Miss Crosby. Good-by."

IX.

ONE evening, within a week after Remington's dismissal, Woodbury Stoughton was sitting on the piazza of the Ocean House at Newport. He had just lighted a cigar, and, having obtained a purchase with his feet against the solid railing, was gently tilting his chair to the rhythm of his own reflections. He was sufficiently in shadow to escape the scrutiny of those who still strolled up and down the broad veranda, listening to the music wafted thither from the not far distant Casino. It was about midnight, but the form of entertainment known as a hop was there in progress, despite the heat of the atmosphere; and the attendant carriages of the revellers, seen through the foliage, passing and repassing each other, like huge solemn glow-worms, upon the avenue which fronts the hotel, gave a murmur to the darkness.

Woodbury would on the morrow be congratulated as one of the luckiest fellows going. Miss Isabel Idlewild, the only daughter of the rich banker, had plighted him her troth to-day, and he had just returned from an interview with the family, supplemented by a passage in the parlor with

his Dulcinea. The old man, as his would-be son-in-law mentally styled Peter Idlewild, had thrown no obstacles in the way of an immediate engagement. Any disposition he might have had to complain at Stoughton's lack of means had been silenced by his wife, who took it upon herself to expound the advantages of the young man's social position. The lover had accordingly found the bearding of the male parent a less terrible undertaking than convention painted it. The banker had declared Isabel's happiness to be his own.

"My daughter tells me, sir, that you and she have kind o' come to terms," he said, when he had taken the young man into the library and shut the door. This kind of thing was foreign to the experience of the ex-circus manager. He felt all at sea, and was doubtful whether propriety demanded from him a jocular or sedate attitude.

"Yes, Mr. Idlewild, I believe so ; that is, of course, with your consent. I love Miss Idlewild, and I have reason to think she is not indifferent to me."

"Well, sir," continued the father, with a curious smile, "I don't see that my consent has much to do with it. If you love Isabel, and she loves you, you're bound to get married somehow, are n't you? That's the way they did things when I was a boy. However, if my consent is all that stands in the way, I guess you won't have much trouble!"

Stoughton expressed his gratitude in an appropriate word or two.

"How old are you?" inquired the other, scrutinizing the young man's handsome face and genteel person.

"Just twenty-six."

"Humph! In the law, are n't yer?"

"Yes, sir; I have been practising about two years."

"I suppose you don't make a very big income yet." There was a twinkle in the capitalist's eye, and Stoughton, in replying, blushed with some confusion. This question of money was one which he had dreaded to touch upon.

"No, sir, I can't say the law is very lucrative just yet. It's rather hard sledding for a young man at first, but I'm beginning to see my way ahead a little. There's plenty of room on the top benches, they say," he added, with an effort to be sprightly.

"I've a small property of my own, Mr. Idlewild," he continued presently.

"How much?"

"About fifteen thousand dollars."

"Humph! Well," the banker remarked after a short pause, "I guess I sha'n't let my daughter come to want. How much now 'll you need to set up with? I suppose a hundred thousand will keep you going for a year or two."

"You are very liberal, sir. I did not expect anything of the sort. I shall do my best to make your daughter happy," Stoughton went on to say, feeling perhaps, in his satisfaction, that something of the sort was incumbent on him.

"Very good, young man. If she's happy, I shall be." The millionaire paused a moment, and then with a relaxation of his dry tone, as if mindful that, after all, this was he whom his child had chosen for a husband, "She's a good girl, Mr. Stoughton,—a good girl. The man who gets her, gets a gold mine. If she's fond of you, that's all I want. You have my consent, and I've money enough for you both."

There was a short silence, and Peter Idlewild rose with a quizzical smile. "I guess you don't want to see me much longer, Mr. Stoughton; there's somebody waiting for you in the parlor."

In the parlor the successful suitor had found his *fiancée*. She arose and stepped forward to meet him. Her face was somewhat pale, but her eyes sparkled with a happy brightness. "Was pa very terrible?" she asked with a joyous laugh, as he grasped her fingers.

"He made no objection. He seems quite willing that we should be married, Isabel."

"Dear old pa. I knew he would n't say no. And are you quite happy?" she continued, as they sat down together on the sofa. "It is so funny to think we are actually engaged. Do you believe it will surprise people? Oh, how strange it all seems!"

"Does n't it, dear?" and Stoughton reached out and took in his the girl's dimpled hand.

She turned her face toward him. "Do you truly, truly love me? And you will never laugh at me again?"

"Laugh at you? Isabel, do you think I would laugh at you? What I told you yesterday was true, every word of it. You are dearer than everything in the world to me. I love you, — I worship you, — I adore you. Isabel, Isabel, — look at me, tell me you believe me."

There was nothing of disordered passion in the young man's manner. His words were spoken in a low sweet tone; and as he waited for a response, he threw his arm around her form in a caressing fashion. She trembled convulsively, and half sought to elude his embrace; but his grasp detained her.

She looked at him with a timid but fond playfulness. "Shall I believe you? You see, I really know you so little." She paused an instant. "Yes, I believe you," she said, softly and shyly.

He took her face between his palms with a delighted air. "Repeat now after me, 'I love you, Woodbury.'"

"Oh, I could n't!" She disengaged herself, and turned away with an embarrassment that was charmingly coy.

"Yes, you can. Please." And the young man renewed his hold.

"Oh, I could n't!" She trembled slightly again, and for a while was silent. Then at last, with a downcast glance and a diffident little laugh, she said, so low that it fell from her lips like a whisper, "I — I like you very much, — Woodbury."

"You darling!" and the lover pressed an ardent kiss upon her cheek. Her eyes were bent upon

her lap. Her breath came and went quickly. She turned suddenly, and, shaking herself free from his pressure, bent her gaze full upon him. There was a strange light of joy on her face. He leaned forward toward her, and with a low cry she suffered herself to be clasped in his arms. Her lips sought his in a long kiss of love.

"Oh!" she cried, as she nestled her head against his shoulder, "and you do really love me, don't you, dear? For I love you so,—Woodbury," and she hid her shamefaced eyes again at the sound of his name.

He patted her hair softly. "I never thought I should care for any one but pa; but I do, you find." And she laughed with a happy, blissful glee.

These memories were present to Stoughton as he sat smoking on the hotel piazza. He had parted from Isabel an hour before. What his own sensations were he scarcely knew. He was very fortunate, and he ought to feel very happy; so he said to himself, as he watched the wreaths of smoke dissolve into the darkness. And yet, what meant this strange weight about his heart, which oppressed him? Had he not won what he had been striving for, accomplished what he had planned and desired? He was in love with Isabel, and he was going to marry her. She would make him very happy. She was a fine girl. He would be well off, and able to satisfy his ambition. He ought to be perfectly contented and happy. He *was* perfectly

contented. Was he? Why then did he not feel a wild transport, a desire to throw his cap into the air and proclaim his rapture to the world? A man just engaged should be bubbling over with bliss, and here he was musing in a corner. That interview with Isabel should have driven away the last vestige of doubt, she was so sweet, so confiding, so full of love for him. Yes, and he—he had sat there, conscious that he was kissing her as a doll, as a beautiful toy,—conscious, though he had striven to banish the impression, that he regarded her in the light of an inferior being. And yet he had acted with his eyes open and of his own free will. Pshaw! these repinings were but the last throes of his subdued romanticism, resembling the muscular action which makes hens run about the barnyard after their heads have been cut off. If it was to be done over again, would he not do it? Yes: and still this weight pressed upon his heart and numbed his sense of happiness.

Wherefore was this? Did he love Dorothy Crosby? Did he feel a regret that he had barred himself forever from the chance of making her his wife? Bah! He had taken this step with deliberation. One cannot have everything in the world, and he had made his choice. No, he did not love her; he did not wish to marry her. Why, in Heaven's name, should he marry her? What was this tyrant that was oppressing his spirit with these sentimental doubts? He surely had a right to consult his own happiness in this respect. There was

no tangible reason why he should wed a penniless girl merely because she was sweet and lovely. That might have been the philosophy of his ancestors, but he could not subscribe to it. But did he not subscribe to it in spite of himself?

He cast his eyes up toward the sky. Above the waving foliage of the trees, which the night air now was stirring, the stars were burning calm and clear. Their orbs, eloquent with chaste but impenetrable mystery, embittered, even while they softened, the young man's spirit. He had gazed so often at the stars before; and what had they ever brought him but thoughts which were not to be fathomed and aspirations that could not be fulfilled? They had been the bugbear of his days, — these vague, intangible yearnings. They had fettered the play and scope of his natural impulses and desires. Ideals? Aspirations? What were they but the reflex of a craving for self-approbation based on the approval of his fellow-men? That which was called right and that which was called wrong, was right or wrong merely by a reference to a human judgment founded upon the laws of nature and the laws of society. The latter varied with every clime and race. Why was it that this shadow of a curse should be hovering about him, like some pale spectre? There were times when men had faith in ghosts; there were times when they believed in hell. But those days were past; at least they were past for him. The conception of an avenging Deity was no longer tenable by thinking beings. He had no more fear

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of future punishment than of a graveyard at night ; and what was there terrible in the vicinity of the tombs of the dead, but the damp and cold ? What difference would it make whether or not he listened to the voice of this whispering tyrant ? Time reconciles us to all things. Time had laid its moss over his wounds before, and would do so again. He had no fear of remorse. Remorse ? And wherefore remorse ? His act was but the selection of his own happiness, a mere choice between two agreeable methods of living. He liked the girl. He could get on with her perfectly, — and her money would be everything to him, for the last six months had treated him badly. He had lost fifteen thousand dollars in speculation.

His thoughts ran on in a swift and analytic vein. And yet, save for ideality, for the hope of something beyond the ken of man, the animal pleasures and passions were the sweetest. Was not all higher enjoyment based necessarily on an assumed, or at least a longed-for, sympathy between the unseen and the human ? What was it that deterred him from vice and lower pursuits, that spurred him to intellectual endeavor, save a sense of kinship with something nobler ? If he followed out the train of his materialistic logic to the end, where would it lead him ? What would become of the race and civilization ? The race ! Civilization ! What was it to-day ? A surging mass of beings, each striving to outstrip the other. And whither were they tending ? Who could tell ? And here he sat, — a man,

a human creature, one of them. Above his head the stars were twinkling with silent poetry. Before his mental vision rose a picture of the throbbing interests and ambitions of real life. The unreal and the real, the material and the ideal! He was conscious of a sense of shame that he would fain have silenced, of a bitter pang that would not depart. Cursed fate, that he must be a victim of the momentum of bygone ages, of the superstition of the past. And yet, even while he murmured was he not aware in his heart that in struggle and resistance lay the secret of the shining stars?

He sat and pondered. Presently he took from his pocket a letter-case, out of which he extracted a tiny note. It had the thumbed look which proceeds from frequent examination, and was in a feminine hand. Stoughton opened it and stared at the white page. Perhaps by holding it toward the adjacent gaslight he might have been able to decipher the writing. But this was quite unnecessary, for the young man knew the contents by heart. The note was from Dorothy Crosby, merely a few lines thanking him for a book he had lent her. He let it remain for a moment on his knee; then, slowly folding it into a narrow strip, struck a match and watched the flame eat its gradual way up the paper. When it was well ablaze he lit his cigar with this precious *allumette*. As he tossed the remains, which threatened to burn his fingers, over the piazza rail, the hotel coach came bowling up to the entrance. It was the hour of arrival for those

who had left New York that afternoon by the boat. There was but one passenger, a thick-set young man, well wrapped in an ulster. As he descended from the vehicle the light fell on his face and disclosed Finchley. Stoughton was standing close by the steps, and the young men recognized each other simultaneously. One who was alert might have noticed a slight scowl of annoyance flit across the new-comer's countenance, but he held out his hand cordially.

"Well, well, Finchley, you're about the last man I expected to see in this place. How did you leave them all in New York? How are stocks?"

"Dull, dull as death. There was so little doing I thought I'd run down here for Sunday. It looks as if you had it pretty much all to yourself here," he said, glancing up at the wide-stretching wooden building, and along the broad piazza, which now lay silent and deserted.

"Yes, I'm rather a night-owl. You'll find it lively enough to-morrow, though. But you must be done up with the heat. Come in and have something to drink."

Stoughton led the way into the bar. While the attendant prepared their orders, the young men chatted on indifferent topics. "Here's luck. Ah," said Finchley, as he drained his glass, "that goes to the right spot. Tell me," he asked presently, turning toward the other, "are the Idlewilds still at Newport?"

"Oh, yes; they have a cottage for the summer,

— Colonel Patterson's old place on Leroy Avenue. I've seen a good deal of them."

"How long have you been down here?" inquired Finchley, after a little.

"About four weeks. You see there's some compensation for being a briefless barrister. We get more time to play the butterfly." Stoughton spoke jocularly, but his companion might have noticed the confusion of his manner.

"I see," said Finchley, dryly. He changed the subject to stocks, and for some minutes discoursed glibly on the state of the market.

Stoughton felt puzzled what to do. Here it was past midnight. The engagement would be announced in the morning, and everybody would know it. There was no reason why he should not tell Finchley. It was much more natural he should. Finchley had been attentive to Miss Idlewild, he knew, but he had no ground for suspecting anything serious. Besides, if there was, he must hear of the news sooner or later.

"Look here, old fellow, let's have another drink." He had never used such familiarity with the broker before, but somehow his spirits seemed to be effervescing under the prospect of narrating his good fortune. There was no question people would think him immensely to be envied. "There's something I want to tell you. I've had a big slice of happiness put to my account to-day. Two more whiskey colds," he interjected to the bar-keeper.

"Is that so? Struck a bonanza?" said the other,

with a grim effort at humor, but with his eyes fastened on the speaker's face.

"I'm engaged to be married. To Miss Idlewild," he added by way of explanation.

"To Miss Idlewild? Well, you are a lucky fellow," replied Finchley, quietly, but without flinching. He cast about his eyes as if in search of some vent for his feelings. His glance fell on the drinks, which were now prepared. He reached forward and seized his glass. "Here's my regards, Stoughton; you're a lucky fellow, a damned lucky fellow," he cried with a fierce fervor, and he drained the whiskey to the bottom. "How much is it?" he asked of the bar-tender with a frown, and he tossed a silver dollar on the counter so that it rang.

"Stop, stop! it's my treat, Finchley. I asked you to drink with me," exclaimed Stoughton.

"No, it's all right; it's my affair; I drank with you before;" but Finchley colored with annoyance. His mechanical action must have betrayed his feelings. "How long have you been engaged?" he inquired abruptly.

Stoughton was a little nettled by the impertinence of the question. He could afford, however, to be good-natured. "Only a short time. It is to be announced to-morrow," he replied quietly.

"Is that so?"

"I shall have to bid you good-night, Finchley; it's rather late for an engaged man," said Stoughton festively, looking at his watch.

The other had lighted a cigar, at which he was

puffing vigorously. "All right. I guess I sha'n't turn in just yet. I want a smoke." Finchley seated himself on the edge of a side-table fronting the counter, which the bar-tender was polishing with a cloth. The latter was a sallow, drawn-out young man, without a shirt-collar, and arrayed in a soiled linen duster. He seemed in no hurry to bring matters to a close, for, after having finished his occupation, he proceeded to pick his teeth reflectively.

"Hot in New York, sir, I dare say," he observed by way of conversation.

"Right you are," was the laconic reply.

"Come by boat to-night, sir?"

"Cor-r-rect!"

There was something trenchant in the tone of his customer which doubtless warned this seeker after information that a continuation of his talkative vein might prove dangerous. At any rate he relapsed into silence, save for a consolatory low whistle, to the melody of which he proceeded to put things to rights, preparatory to closing up. He turned out all the lights except one small gas-jet. Revenge was here simple and perhaps justifiable. "Time to close the bar, sir."

"All right." Finchley was sitting on the table with his legs hanging over, sending forth now and again from his pursed-up lips wreaths of smoke. One foot swung nervously to and fro. "I suppose there's no way of getting back to New York to-night?"

"Nothing till to-morrow." The tables were turned. The stranger was the interrogator now. But the victor, either generously content with a short triumph, or unable to resist — for the sake of a mere sentimental consideration, like pride — a chance of satisfying his propensity, asked, after a pause, "Expecting to make a lengthy stop, sir?"

Finchley made no reply. He passed out through the corridors on to the piazza again, where he walked up and down with a quick tread. He did not know exactly what to make of his sensations. A feeling of utter misery, as if — in the language of his own calling — the bottom had dropped out of everything, oppressed him. Little accustomed to analyze his impressions, he simply gritted his teeth in the ecstasy of a suffering he could not quite understand, and paced the platform much after the method of a wounded animal that is ignorant of all save the pain. Life seemed a void, a complete blank. There was nothing worth having. The handsome profit placed to his account the past six months, on a lot of Western bonds which his firm had floated with success, no longer caused him a thrill at its remembrance.

He stepped off the piazza and wandered along Bellevue Avenue, which was now wrapped in silence. No footfall but his own was stirring. On either side of the way, through a vanguard of dusky trees, handsome cottages slumbered on a sea of glittering lawn; for the moon had risen. He walked rapidly, with eyes cast on the ground. He was scarcely

aware of a destination, and perhaps, if he had fully realized whither his steps were tending, would have rebelled. He had been to Newport once or twice already this summer, and this walk was familiar to him. Upon reaching a corner where one of the side streets crosses the main avenue, he turned down the same, but with a slackened pace. Close at hand rose, clear and white in the moonshine, a stately villa, built somewhat in the style of an ancient castle. A grove of chestnuts shut in the front; but there was a skirting of box-hedge upon the side of the grounds that bordered the cross-road, over which could be seen fantastic beds of flowers, and further away a tennis-court. A neatly gravelled avenue twisted its course through the lawn, like a shining snake.

Finchley stood still. The well-known sight had brought him to his senses, or rather opened his eyes more significantly to the sources of his sorrow. He sighed heavily, and, glancing up at the windows for an instant, turned on his heel. As he reached the corner of the avenue again, he almost ran upon a man who was reeling along the path, close to the fence, in a half-inebriated condition.

"G'd ev'ning. Say, boss, ain't you got something for a poor feller?"

Finchley was going to pass on, but the individual ran out in front of him with a beseeching, cringing air. He was a meagre-faced, dishevelled-looking wretch, with no suggestion of the highwayman about him. "Just a thrifle, boss."

"What do you want with money this time of night?"

"Well, boss," said the man, with a gaunt leer, and a huskiness of tone, which he intended to be wheedling, "I need a drink awful bad."

There was something of pathos in the appeal that harmonized with Finchley's mood. Here was another fellow-being as miserable as himself, perhaps, whose sorrows could be drowned for an hour by a glass of poor whiskey. A small price for happiness, forsooth! And, after all, were not the unconscious delights of intoxication paramount to every other gratification? No recollection of bitterness there! Nothing but the untrammelled spirit floating on a cloud. He reached down into his pocket and drew forth a handful of small coins. In their midst glistened a five-dollar gold bit, fresh from the mint. It was a habit with Finchley to carry a few gold pieces about with him. Perhaps their daintiness pleased him, or he thought they gave him an air of splendor. He tossed the coin in question to the beggar. It fell on the ground with a chink and described an arc into the gutter, from which the unsteady fingers of the searcher presently rescued it.

"Heaven bless yer, boss."

"That's all right. Go and get drunk now, — roaring, boiling drunk, mind. Have an A-number-one time for once in your life." And Finchley strided on with a glowing consciousness of having slapped the Angel Gabriel's face, as it were. He

felt at odds with destiny and ripe to play the social iconoclast.

His dream was dissipated. Not that it had been a soaring conception, this love of his ; but the fervor had been genuine of its kind. A beautiful girl at the head of his table, in a snug little house bedizened with all that is pretty and cosey, — a soft, plump cheek, and radiant eyes to be proud of at the theatre, or the supper parties he would give at Delmonico's, — such was its objective end. He had money enough, and she would have millions some day. But her wealth was by way of an afterthought. What had been ever present to him was the subtle tremor of excitement which her presence evoked, a consciousness that was strange to him, and delightful from its very vagueness. He had lived, so to speak, from hand to mouth through the years of his youth, with but one idea as a beacon, — the necessity of becoming rich. He had taken existence as he found it. He had practised the commonplace virtues with the best intention ; but, in his haste and absorption, what others did had been good enough for him. His world had been the streets of New York, and his laws, the laws of trade. His knowledge of what was outside and beyond was but superficial, and his latter-day efforts to arrive thereat had, as we already know, been stamped with an ostentatious vulgarity.

The advent of his passion scarcely altered his habits, but a new train of perceptions had been awakened thereby. A certain tenderness of na-

ture, hitherto unknown to him, — a coarse-grained, clumsy article, to be sure, but still a reality, — had manifested itself. A growing conviction of the grossness of his own mode of life had stirred under the breath of love and been slowly fanned to a flame, which, though not prodigious, might have sufficed in time to keep the *penates* warm. Thoughts of public usefulness, — such as a career in politics, — that had been before merely hazy conceptions, assumed the form of distinct ambitions. This new master of his spirit demanded fealty, and he had been prepared to ratify his claims.

But now it was all over. The vision had vanished, and he was remanded to the society of his old companions. As the truth dawned upon him, he experienced the repulsion of one who comes out of the sunshine into an apartment stale with smoke and lighted by gas. He had never realized until this moment the extent to which his interest in Isabel had separated him from the past, and a sense of angry grief, mingled with despair, kept him tossing on his couch until the gray of morning.

X.

ONE evening late in the following winter, Remington sat sipping his coffee after dinner at the club, which had become a favorite resort of his. He met there principally men who, like himself, had enjoyed the advantages of a university education. It was there that he had become more alive to the feverish energy of his own generation, and had grown to admire the ability and information of men who were but a few years older than himself. Many, of course, were to be found there who were simply votaries of pleasure, — mere loungers, who read the newspapers and played cards as an existence ; but the larger portion were intelligent, earnest-minded men, who came thither for relaxation. That they were an ambitious, hard-working set it was easy to see from the expression of their faces, and from the supineness with which they took their ease, as if they could not feel sure of ever being at leisure again. Shrewd and intelligent in matters of business, they were charmingly versatile in moments of recreation. Many of them had travelled abroad, and the conversation to be heard often bore the stamp of sense and cleverness. Their speech was, however, tinged with that peculiar ironical humor

common to all classes in this country, against which nothing is completely sacred. To touch serious topics with a light hand was there a custom; and yet they loved dearly to philosophize after dinner. For the rest, their dress was in excellent taste; they breakfasted very late on Sunday mornings; it was uncommon to find one who did not turn to the stock quotations before anything else in the newspaper; and, almost unanimously, they inveighed against the political debasement of the country. There were many who, though young, had already acquired reputation in their callings, and yet who delighted in company to scoff at ambition and harp upon the omnipotence of wealth.

Upon quitting Bar Harbor eight months before, life had seemed a terrible blank to Remington, and the wound caused by Miss Crosby's refusal had smarted far into the autumn. His love had been thoroughly genuine, and the sudden extinction of the beacon upon which his eyes had rested unwaveringly for the past two years left him in utter darkness. His catastrophe with Miss Maud Bolles sank into insignificance beside the desperation of this really heart-felt grief. After the edge of his suffering became so far blunted as to permit of rational thought, he had tried to analyze the situation, but without much comfort. He was all adrift as to Miss Crosby's feelings. Speculation as to his chances of success, in case he were to persevere, left him at the close precisely where he started from.

There had been a gradual sequel to this frame of

mind. Her refusal had been decided : oh, yes, perfectly decided ; still she had said there was no one else. Perhaps time would make a difference. If he went to work and showed himself worthy of her, she might come to like him some day. His best plan undoubtedly would be to neglect her for a while. He had heard that girls miss attentions to which they have become accustomed, and that a lover has much more chance, if he fights shy of one who has given him the mitten. Little by little he began to take more interest in his down-town work. He felt that he ought not to allow his scheme of life to be interfered with by a disappointment of this kind. Marriage was only an incident in a man's career ; and however deplorable it might be to meet with disaster where hopes had been garnered up, despair ought not to be permitted to encroach too far. It may be, too, there was a dash of vengeance in his industry. He would like to distinguish himself, and prove to Miss Crosby how much she had lost by throwing him overboard. Girls do not like to see their suitors recover from the effects of a somersault too easily. If she could hear that he was able to be so diligent, would not the sweetness of her triumph be sensibly diminished ?

But the concomitant of these resolutions had been much thoughtfulness and some cynicism. It pleased him to represent to himself that a material view of existence was the most satisfactory, and that love was only a delusion. It was more difficult to remain faithful to the idealism which he used to

woo in his younger days. Modern life, with its whirl of prosaic business cares and worldly pleasures, reminded him of a country road in midsummer, upon which a pitiless sun pours down, where the foliage on either side is shabby with choking dust, and no breeze stirs. He lived on from day to day; he enjoyed himself in a certain measure, but it was so difficult to extract from existence aught that was exhilarating or refreshing to that inner sense of aspiration. The spiritual oxygen of creation seemed to have become exhausted, and the world to lie, like the landscape of his vision, veiled in depressing dust.

It was best to take life quietly and sensibly. He enjoyed his profession, and he had the means to indulge in all rational amusements. His bachelor days were lapped in comfort, if he would but look at the matter philosophically. Ah, that was just what he did do,—look at the matter philosophically! There was the whole difficulty. It was the philosophy of life which lay at the root of his trouble. It was that great enigma of the whence and the wherefore and the whither, rising up forever in his thoughts, that doomed him to unrest. Not purely selfish was his struggle for the means of living and the meed of fame; but with his daily work was mingled a desire to do the best he could, to contribute his mite toward the solution of that mystery which he could never expect to unravel. Others were working around him in the same spirit. They toiled until the flesh was weary, and then they

drowned fatigue in full-fledged pleasure. But still it was a hard and hueless labor, like that of the mine, unillumined by the rays of a warm and definite inspiration. It was, as it were, a standing face to face with fate, the heart whispering the while, "We will be faithful, but we have no hope." Whither was this strife of humanity tending? Has the world advanced in the drift and intensity of its aspirations from what it was a hundred years ago? Mankind were more comfortable now, doubtless; they understood better how to take care of themselves, to ward off disease, and to abbreviate suffering; but did the spirit that animated men's breasts to-day soar above the cold and leaden realities of material things? Sometimes it seemed to him as if the pioneers of human intelligence stood, pick in hand, before a frowning wall through which no ray penetrated; while down below, on the plains from whence they had climbed, seethed a mass of struggling beings without faith, without aspirations, the keynote of whose desperate and envious philosophy was to destroy those who were more prosperous than themselves.

And yet, with changing mood, he would perhaps oftener dwell upon the sincerity of modern labor, on the enthusiastic, critical, and patient temper of research in all fields, the stern desire for truth at every cost. This, at least, was the attitude of a vast contingent of intelligent, sober-minded men, who neither flaunted in society nor figured in the newspapers. The new and marvellous inventions

of science, the countless schemes and appliances for the bettering of the condition of the poor and ignorant, the vast foundations for the spread of knowledge, alike testified to the danger of judging the world's core by the pulsation of its extremities. The fashionable whirl and socialistic outcries were but as the chaff upon the threshing-floor, or the sparks from the grindstone.

On New Year's day he called upon Dorothy. She was not at home, and so it chanced that he scarcely saw her all winter. They had exchanged a few words at parties; that was all. But Remington rarely went to parties now. Indeed, it was a matter of comment that he was completely changed. Miss Lawton declared, as he shook hands with her at the last of the "Late and Plentiful" germans, that she had hardly laid eyes on him for six months. "I hear you are *blasé*, Mr. Remington."

"Not so bad as that, I hope; call it busy."

The only person of the other sex with whom Remington had cultivated an intimacy of late was Mrs. Tom Fielding. He had got into the way of dropping in at her house in the evening. After coming up town he would dress himself, dine at the club, read the papers for half an hour, and then, if he did not play whist or go to the theatre, would turn his steps toward her door, which was only a block distant. He had found her an extremely agreeable companion. She was very sympathetic, and evinced a keen interest in literary and artistic matters.

The early part of the winter, Remington had flattered himself that male society sufficed for all his needs in the way of companionship. He had been quite content to establish himself with his cigar in an easy-chair, and chat the evening away with some friend at the club, — often with Lattimer, who was a suggestive spirit, and occasionally with Ramsay Whiting. During such hours time took unto itself wings. The conversation, beginning with the surroundings and the current gossip, would branch off to the stock market, travel by short stages from politics to sociology, and finally arrive at immortality. At length would come a pause, — a reflective draining of the last drops of the beverage, as if there were an expectation of catching a glimpse of the infinite at the bottom of the glass, — and that glance at the watch which accompanies a return to consciousness.

“Another drink?”

“Thank you, I believe not.”

Then followed the struggle back into his ulster, and the stroll in the cool night air along the deserted pavements. He would glance at the chaste stars, and feel their influence probe as it were his unhealed wound. He was perfectly happy in communion with his own sex. A fig for the society of the other!

That had been two months ago; but to-night he sat stirring his coffee in the pleasant consciousness that he was to spend the evening with an attractive woman, — one who was intelligent enough to under-

stand him, and clever, on her own account withal. He glanced at the clock ; it was later than usual, for he had been detained at the office. It would be time to go in a few minutes. He took up the evening paper, and came upon Woodbury Stoughton's name as a newly appointed director of several important concerns in which his father-in-law held a controlling interest. He had not seen so much of Woodbury since his marriage. Their pursuits and ideas, too, seemed less in common than formerly ; though he now and then dropped in to dinner at his friend's beautiful house. Stoughton was much absorbed in his career at Albany, and since the caucus he and Remington had by tacit consent avoided conversing about politics. Isabel appeared happy. She was looking very handsome since her marriage, and had been a good deal into society.

Remington had the Stoughtons in his mind as he donned his overcoat and walked up the street. There was a tinge of envy to his thought concerning them. After all, Woodbury had shown himself a level-headed fellow. His friend seemed somehow always to fall on his feet. He had married a beautiful girl, and acquired with her a pot of money. That might just as well have happened to *him*. Why had n't it ? He was sacrificing his welfare to a mere sentiment. There were plenty of girls in New York just as attractive as Miss Crosby, if he would only choose to look at the matter without prejudice.

And yet this wavering on his own part annoyed him. He felt ashamed of himself for harboring the

possibility of a doubt regarding the wisdom of his choice. He had always believed his attachment for Miss Crosby to be of the deepest kind, and yet of late he had constantly caught himself putting his hand on his heart, as it were, to see if it were beating with sufficient intensity, which reminded him of children digging up seeds that they have planted, to find out whether they are growing.

Mrs. Fielding greeted him with cordiality. She was very grateful to him for coming, she said, as she was all alone and rather low-spirited. Her husband had gone to the meeting of some philanthropic society. He was wrapped up in model tenement houses and other schemes to better the condition of the poor. She was just reading the proofs of a report regarding co-operative housekeeping that Mr. Fielding had written. Would he like to look at them?

Remington took the sheets from her hand and ran his eye over them. "I often wonder," he said, "if the poor are really more unhappy than the well-to-do. Except in the case of actual suffering from cold or hunger, their very necessity to work without stopping to think must be in a certain sense a relief. The responsibility of choice is removed from them; or rather their only choice is between unceasing labor and starvation."

"I should prefer to starve."

"Perhaps, with your experience of something different. But the sweetness of toil has ever been

proverbial. I, for one, can testify to the gratification of feeling at night the emotionless fatigue of the clown. Are you altogether certain that the liberty to split hairs with one's consciousness is to be esteemed a boon?"

"That is," she asked in soft tones, without looking up from her embroidery, "you regard the problem of existence as too complex for the highly evolved brain? It is preferable, you think, to be body-tired than mind-tired?"

"My remark was in the form of a question simply. Is it preferable to beat iron and brass or to beat the air? The artisan works for bread and meat, but what are you and I working for,— what are we seeking?"

"Yes; I have often thought of that."

"Look back a thousand, two thousand years, and what more do we know to-day concerning the purpose of existence? Centuries ago, men loved and laughed, and toiled and slept, and ate and mourned, and finally they died. That is what mankind are doing now. The world is a pleasanter place to live in, perhaps. We have discovered how to exist more comfortably. We have learned, from experience, that wars and dirt and polygamy and unwholesome food diminish the happiness of the individual. We no longer burn our brethren at the stake because they do not chance to agree with us, and we are able to communicate by word of mouth with those who are distant hundreds of miles. But what more have we grasped concerning the mystery of life?"

What has the nineteenth century to say to you and me, who have food to eat and clothes to wear?"

"Better food and more clothes," she answered, with a laugh. She was silent a minute, and, taking from the table a fan, moved mechanically to and fro its mother-of-pearl sticks, which were edged with white fluff. "You think, then, religion is an excellent thing for the masses, but that it is out of date for you and me?"

"Heaven forbid! With the advent of greater intelligence we have, to be sure, become exempt from the delusion and superstition which victimizes many others. We know that prayer will not save the life of a man wounded in a particular spot, and that human beings inherit their dispositions. But however much we may grope and wonder, every man is forced at last back upon himself, it seems to me. We cannot escape our own characters; and, despite logical demonstration to the contrary, we cling to a belief that we are responsible for our actions."

He paused a moment. "Go on," she said, glancing up at him. "I want to hear you through."

"There is not much to say," he answered; but he added that one tired of trying to unravel the mysteries of living and sought refuge in action. There, at least, however difficult the path might be, it was tolerably plain. It was possible to distinguish between evil and good, between what is hurtful to society and the reverse. Unintelligible and bewildering as creation seemed as a whole, one

was never at a loss as to the value of proximate conduct. "There are two things in life that seem to me certain," he said: "one is that no man can be completely happy; the other, that the greatest chance of happiness lies in obedience to the promptings of one's own conscience. The world found that secret out ages ago, and it has outlived all philosophies."

Mrs. Fielding was silent a moment. "And you mean," she said, "that it is more difficult for people who enjoy the so-called advantages of life to appreciate this?"

"Yes; for, being free from the superstitions that influence the ignorant, they are more susceptible to the arguments of materialism, from their very ability to make discriminations and reason from cause to effect."

"We have to give up more, too, if we obey our consciences," she said. Remington noticed that she held her lace handkerchief by the tips, and was twisting it round and round.

"Indeed we do. The thing we have to renounce is often so essential to happiness as to make the bar which separates us from it seem very shadowy."

"Do you ever feel like that?" She glanced up quickly as she spoke. "I mean—that is," she continued, with some confusion, "do things affect you so strongly?"

Remington smiled. "You think me, then, incapable of intensity?"

"No, not that. I did n't mean that, of course."

She looked into distance a moment, then turned her eyes toward the floor. "I suppose I was surprised to think any one could be as unhappy as I have been."

Remington was aware that she was conscious he knew her story, and remained silent. He knew, also, that they were friends, and felt that this confidence on her part was somehow as the act of one who is groping in the dark and seeks a helping hand.

"At least you have conquered,—lived down your sorrow," he said presently, with the lack of appositeness of one at loss for a reply.

"Have I?" she replied, with a tremor of the voice. She passed her hand hastily across her eyes. "Oh, yes, I am happy, quite happy. You must not think I am not, Mr. Remington. Only, you see," and there were tears in her tone despite her effort to control herself, "when you spoke of it all in such a calm, analyzing way, as if faith were something to be accepted or not, just as one preferred, I could n't help wondering if you had ever known what it is to care intensely for something that was forbidden you. A woman needs more than a code of morals, more than the husk of a belief to cling to. It must be real and burning and a part of her life; for there are moments when, if it were otherwise—" She paused and covered her face with her hands. "And yet you all say religion is but a convention,—a superstition."

Remington leaned forward and touched her

shoulder. "No, no, my friend, you misunderstood me, — I did not say that ; I —"

The sound of footsteps in the entry interrupted his words, and the young woman scarcely had time to rouse herself from her position before the portière was drawn aside and the servant announced Mr Woodbury Stoughton. For an instant the latter stood as if surprised at the encounter. Perhaps, too, through Remington's mind passed the thought that the key to the confession he had just heard was at hand ; for were not those words "convention" and "superstition" corner-stones in the oft-listened-to philosophy of his quondam friend ? But Mrs. Fielding, veiling her countenance behind the mask that is part of the wardrobe of every clever woman, advanced with her head poised on one side, and a cordial greeting.

"Good-evening, Mr. Stoughton."

XI.

LENT was come again. It was late this year, —so much so, in fact, that even the most exuberant of party-goers heard the Ash-Wednesday chimes with a sense of relief. The season had been very gay. Some people ascribed the number of festivities to the circumstance that every one felt well off. There were others who declared that whereas, last winter, a large sprinkling of society was in mourning, this year nobody worth mentioning had died. At all events, the caterers, hackmen, florists, and reporters, who, it may be said, constitute the *supes* of the social stage, announced that there had been more going on than during any season in the course of their long professional experience.

Among those who listened to the harbingers of the holy period with satisfaction was Dorothy Crosby. To begin with, she was used up; and then, too, she felt low in her mind, and in need of leisure to collect her thoughts. She had received a vast amount of attention. People had discovered her talent for making herself agreeable, and she had suffered the usual penalty thereof.

The winter had been, on the whole, even more delightful to her than the preceding one; more delightful, and yet different. The first had been attractive on the score of dazing novelty and the gradual, surprised discovery of her own powers; but her very familiarity with the ways of society had made the recent months seem peculiarly charming. She felt herself at home, and saw things with her eyes open, which was quite as entrancing an optic condition, in its way, as the prismatic vertigo that turns the head of the *débutante*. It was delightful to be invited to the most select and charming entertainments, to be sought for more dances than there were to bestow, to be the recipient of what Pauline Lawton called "floral tributes,"—to be conscious, in short, that people liked you. She had enjoyed it all intensely, and she had let herself go and be borne along by the impetus of the whirl. She had scarcely tried to think. There had been no time to think.

She sat at her desk this morning, however, with tear-stained eyes. She had been weeping much during the night; and now, as she pressed her little signet-ring with a stubborn emphasis upon the seal of the note she had just finished, she gave vent once more to a convulsive sob. Unhappy to relate, she had undergone a dreadful scene with her mother the evening before. Mrs. Crosby had heard, with a stony silence which sought relief at last in a stormy, watery rage, Dorothy's announcement of having declined Ramsay Whiting's offer of marriage. The

maternal plans had been sadly upset by this unexpected announcement. To be sure, Dorothy, if questioned, had always betrayed indifference regarding the young millionaire ; but Mrs. Crosby had flattered herself that when it came to the actual point the girl would have too much sense to throw away such a brilliant chance. If there had been anything against Mr. Whiting, it would have been different ; but here he was, an irreproachable *parti*, — kind, high-principled, and a gentleman, so every one said, — and evidently very much in love with Dorothy.

“I should not have said a word,” Mrs. Crosby continued to argue, “were there any one else in the way. If you were in love with anybody else, Dorothy, I could understand your reason for refusing this young man ; but, as it stands, your conduct is inexplicable. You did the same thing last summer in the case of Mr. Remington, whom you professed to like. Do you expect an angel to come down out of the sky for your especial benefit?”

“No, mamma,” said Dorothy, too much overcome by the anguish of her emotions to realize that this last interrogatory scarcely required an answer.

“You certainly have given him encouragement lately,” Mrs. Crosby went on to observe. “You have accepted his flowers and gone to walk with him repeatedly. I should think he would consider you had treated him very badly.”

“Oh, mamma, how can you?” and the culprit burst into renewed sobs. “I never wore any of his

flowers, and — and I declined several of his invitations to go to walk, on purpose — when I wanted to go.”

The tears flowed apace. Despite her protestations, a lurking sense of guilt had already been embittering the natural discomfort one feels at being obliged to cause another pain; and these allusions on the part of her mother were like so many knife-thrusts. Struggle as she would, the dreadful truth stared her in the face, that she had let things go on with but little concern as to the consequences. She had accepted Mr. Whiting's attentions smilingly, allowed him to send her costly roses, and promenaded with him in retired neighborhoods, without a momentary idea of ever marrying him. His devotion meant nothing beyond gallantry,—so she persuaded herself. A great many men did send flowers without serious intentions. Nor was it much consolation now to reflect that she had been so far on her guard as to assume a cold demeanor on several occasions when Mr. Whiting's manner had been especially intense. She had persuaded herself that such manifest signs as not wearing his flowers in her bosom, and limiting her walks with him to once a fortnight, were ample to show a discerning man — if by any chance he happened to be in earnest — that a successful issue to his suit was out of the question. How dreadfully it all made her feel now! She had simply been “whipping the devil round the stump.” And then, too, she had told Mr. Whiting, in response to

his avowal of love, that she had never supposed he could possibly be in earnest.

A night's reflection had not brought much relief. But despite her prostration, she had just completed an answer to an impassioned note from her admirer, found beside her breakfast plate, begging a reconsideration of her resolve, in which she had informed him, kindly but firmly, that under no circumstances whatever would it be possible for her to accept his offer. When she had sent the note her feelings got the better of her, and she broke down completely. Not, for a moment, that she regretted her decision. She had never wavered, either at the time of Mr. Whiting's declaration or subsequently. Still, her sensations were far from satisfactory. It was not altogether clear to her why she had refused him. She liked Mr. Whiting very much, — very much indeed. But then, she did not love him. No, that was certain; she did not love him the least bit in the world. Still, she did not love anybody. And the worst of it was, there seemed to be no chance of her growing to love anybody. She thought of what her mother had said about the angel. She must be very heartless and cold to be indifferent to so much devotion. Poor Mr. Whiting really seemed very fond of her. Of course she would n't be able to tell a soul. It would be hateful, having to keep it all to herself. Florence Lawton would guess in a minute what had happened from a cessation of his attentions; but honor required her to say nothing, even to her. Mr. Whiting would probably

not speak to her again at parties for a long time, and she liked him *so* much. Mr. Remington, too, had been almost rude lately,—he was so offish. If he wished to avoid her, he was welcome to, for all she cared. He was not as nice as he used to be.

It was about eight months since that final interview at Bar Harbor with Mr. Remington. How miserable she had felt afterwards! It had seemed as if there were a sort of void in her life that could not be filled. But at least she had experienced then no consciousness of blame. She had not unduly encouraged her first lover. That was all over now. Of course it was all over! She had told Mr. Remington at the time that anything stronger than friendship between them was an impossibility. She had seen but very little of him this winter. How fast the winter had slipped away! It had been delightful. Yet, looking back, there was something unsatisfactory in the reminiscence. No, she had enjoyed herself. It might have been unprofitable, but she could not regret the happiness she had known.

Still, in spite of her lack of time to reflect, her ideas had changed very much since a year ago. She was older, and the world no longer seemed the bright, poetic place it used. She had become alive to its grimness and practicality. If any one had told her, last winter, that she would grow to be such a callous being, she would have ridiculed the notion. Existence was not easy for women. What a feeble,

insignificant part, after all, those in her condition played in the struggle of life! How little opportunity they had of understanding its real workings! They were so hedged about by conventions, they could only catch a glimpse of that which actually took place in the world. They had to be dependent for information on what men saw fit to tell them; and were they not victims of delusion in consequence? It was a tacit matter of honor with the other sex not to undeceive their credulity. Certain opinions and conditions of affairs were to be assumed as true in their presence, which every man believed to be false. Religion and babies are all they need to make them happy, and we will humor them in their innocent theories regarding life as it is; such was the attitude of husbands and fathers and brothers.

Whatever one might say, woman was undoubtedly the inferior of man in countless ways. In physique and intellectual qualities there was a wide divergence between them. There was a sort of pettiness about her sex that was foreign to man. This proceeded from the nature of her occupations,—so she had heard said; but, whatever its origin, it existed. She was conscious of it herself. The feminine mind worked differently. Woman was barred by her very organism from the same processes of thought. She could discern in her own case how susceptible she was to the influence of imagination and the feelings, and how largely her reason was in subjection thereto. This, as she had

read and been told, was owing to the peculiar structure of her nervous system. She had been fashioned by Nature for certain functions, and she must be content therewith.

Nature, how strange a thing this Nature was ! There were those who argued that woman had come to be what she was to-day simply through an arbitrary division of labor, carried on through long centuries. The original differences between men and women had been comparatively slight, but these had been widened and intensified from age to age by the character of the occupations of the respective sexes. The inferiority of woman was mainly the result of the part she had played in an artificial social system, of the suppression and ill-usage to which she had been subjected in the past. Now that society had come to recognize its injustice, it was for the members of the so-called weaker sex to train those faculties that most needed development.

And yet, if one thought of rebellion, or a deviation from the beaten path, how repulsive the prospect was ! She recoiled instinctively from all ideas of invading man's province and assimilating what was masculine. All such endeavors seemed abhorrent to her very being. She could not but call to mind the unpleasing qualities of the female advocates, of a change in the status of women with whom she was acquainted. If there was one thing in life she esteemed precious, it was the innate delicacy which caused her to shrink from what was

rough and common. It seemed to her that external charm and loveliness were the complement of refinement of spirit, and that they should walk hand in hand. One could not exist in completeness without the other. Was there not a dependence between the graceful figure, the snow-white arm, and the soft tones of the voice, and nobility and purity of thought and desire? With the loss of finish and elegance would come a diminution in the quality of those exquisite aspirations which are peculiar to the feminine disposition. Inclined as she might be to cavil against Nature for having made the sphere of her sex so limited, she felt an intuitive hostility toward everything that would conduce to sully or impair her womanliness. Was it not better to be true to her native tendencies, and to fulfil the part she was fitted to play, even if it were a secondary one?

Her part! What was that part? It was indeed difficult to say. There appeared to be so little need of her in the world; or rather, perhaps, it was that the employments of her life were so petty. The small household cares, the unheroic round of social duties, even the studies that she sedulously pursued, were all lacking in inspiration. Her days (full enough, and still so empty) seemed to glide on without much profit to herself or anybody else. And yet it was all she could do,—all that there was for her to do. She intended during this Lenten season to visit more regularly the poor families who had been placed under her supervision by the

charitable association with which she was connected. How far removed she was from these poor wretches! Was it possible that a just and omniscient God had given her so many comforts, and them so much suffering? How ungrateful she was for the blessings that had been bestowed upon her!

In her faith, at least, there was comfort. There she could find, there she *did* find, an answer to her questionings. It was God's will that she was fulfilling; and, however humdrum or thorny the path, she would pursue it steadfastly, and without repining. The transports of worship appealed to the sensibilities of her nature. The mysterious but precious yearnings that she felt for something upon which to expend the wealth of her being, sought a focus in the religion of Christ. Her impulses toward tenderness and purity found comfort and quickening in the ecstasies of spiritual exaltation.

Under the influence of such feelings she went much to church during this Lenten period. She liked to go best of all in the gray of the afternoon, when the recesses of the church which she attended grew dim in the waning light, and the last rays of the winter sun, struggling through the stained window, flickered on the chancel's pavement. Her spirit reached out in emotional desire to live more worthily, and she seemed to derive consolation and stimulus from this intimate communion with the unseen. The mystic philosophy of the mortifica-

tion of self in the divine love, with its symbol of a deified Christ atoning for the sins of men, stirred her heart to a tender pathos.

And yet there were times when the mysteries of her creed caused her to doubt and question. Even in moments of ardent worship, it was rather the sense of blessedness — touching her spirit as with the brush of an angel's wing — that appealed to her, than any definite realization of evangelical doctrines. The meaning of much that she heard from the pulpit concerning the precise articles of orthodoxy seemed vague to her. She contented herself at first with slurring over these perplexities as non-essentials of faith. Such a posture was, however, an impossibility for long to an honest nature, and to Dorothy's keen mind the attainment of truth was indispensable to repose. It was her desire to escape the stricture so often passed upon her sex, of unreasoning fealty to superstition. Here, at least, she sympathized with the movement to cultivate the feminine intelligence. Women had ceased to be dolls and playthings. Society was ripe for their efforts to understand the serious problems of humanity. The influence of her sex in moulding the character of the young ought to be borne in mind, and it was the duty of each one to seek to be able to grasp and criticise the newest thoughts concerning life. She had herself a keen interest in what the world was thinking about, and the taste for knowledge which she had cultivated at school had increased with her years. It was her

principle to probe everything to the bottom, so far as she was able, in her desire for truth.

But still — despite a gradual shattering, in her eyes, of the conventional conception of a personal Deity—she scarcely faltered at heart concerning the responsibility of life and her sense of dependence on a higher power. Even in her most grievous moments of mystification regarding the doctrines of the Church creed, the belief that there was a divine purpose in human existence never deserted her. As she knelt at her bedside with clasped hands, looking up to meet the heavenly influence, the conviction that this life was not everything, and that there would be an answer to it somewhere, stirred her bosom with a strange potency. Nor did the argument of the sceptics — that this feeling was but the momentum of ancestral superstition, which in a few generations would wear away — seem to her as worthy of an instant's consideration. There must be a purpose in all this vast, throbbing world. There must be some better response than annihilation to all the love and all the suffering of the centuries. It would be so unjust, so cruel, otherwise ; and one who had seen her sweet, earnest face and glistening eyes at such a moment would have whispered an Amen to her faith.

It was under the influence of such reflections that Dorothy came, during the Lenten period and the spring which followed, to form a philosophy for herself, or rather to try to observe in her own case

certain regulations that seemed to her of importance. Modern reading had filled her mind with a sense of the influence which so-called natural causes have upon the entire being. She had grown to see that the food we eat and the air we breathe affect materially the human structure, and that the movement of our thoughts is vastly dependent upon the conditions of the body. The wonderful operation of the laws of heredity, as portrayed in the books of the day, had revealed to her how much the welfare of offspring is in the hands of parents. A desire to conform to the laws of Nature, and to resist those agencies which threaten health and vitality, began to be a part of her religious system.

Thus life for Dorothy during these months and far into another year was deeply introspective but uneventful. As she had anticipated, she never saw Ramsay Whiting. He had taken his dismissal as final, and according to rumor was striving to soothe the smart of his disappointment by political and agricultural activity. Arthur Remington called one spring afternoon when she was out, and on her birthday, a fortnight later, she received an anonymous basket of flowers the label of which was addressed in his handwriting. When summer came, she went to Bar Harbor for a little while, but sought a tranquil shelter through August with some friends who had an eyrie on the same coast out of the course of tourist travel. And October came once more without bringing further incident than a daily round of trivial duty and earnest introspection into her life.

But it was otherwise with the young bride who lived not many blocks away. October found her just recovering from the effects of a confinement. She was so far convalescent as to be able to be down-stairs once more, and her father was dining with her for the first time since baby was born. He and Woodbury were smoking their cigars in the dining-room, and she was in the parlor waiting for them. Though still handsome, Isabel had altered in her appearance since marriage. The *embonpoint*, which but added a charm to her girlish proportions, had developed so as to give her cheeks and figure a trace of coarseness. She resembled Peter Idlewild more closely than ever. A newspaper lay on her lap, from which she had been trying to extract a little light on the political questions of the day that absorbed her husband so keenly, — for she hated to be ignorant of the things Woodbury was interested in, — but she had given the task up in despair. He was a candidate for the Assembly again, and there were some who were opposed to his re-election. It was all so perplexing, this discussion of platforms and parties. She could not understand what it meant; and from a recognition of her helplessness in this respect she had lapsed into reverie. Her complexion had not quite regained its bloom, and the firm mouth wore an expression that almost suggested pain.

Why was it her husband did not care for her more? She loved him so deeply, so truly; and yet he — he was cold and indifferent. He was kind, —

yes, he was kind ; but kindness was a poor substitute for the affection she craved. She was certain of it, — he tolerated her, and that was all. Why was it, oh ! why was it ? He seemed to be drifting away from her. She had lost the power to interest him. He told her so little about himself. He was unwilling to share his thoughts with her. When she talked, and tried to express interest in what concerned him, and to understand his hopes and ambitions, he listened to her with an amused smile. "Don't bother your little head, my dear, about such matters," he would say. Bother her head ? O Woodbury, Woodbury ! If he could but know how much she loved him, and longed to be a help to him ! She was foolish and ignorant. She was not fit to be a help to any one. He was right ! How could she expect him to confide in one who was not able to appreciate his meaning ? She had frittered away her girlhood, and neglected her opportunities to learn, and now she was paying the penalty. The contrast between herself and many whom she saw about her was a keen and painful reality. She was, she could perceive, illiterate and lacking in breeding.

She caught a glimpse of herself in the glass. She was losing her beauty, too. She was becoming coarse and unlovely. Her hands were fat, and her wedding ring pressed so tightly that it had furrowed the flesh. She would be ugly soon, and he would cease to care for her altogether.

Bah ! How absurd of her to take on in this way !

Her nerves were weak. She was not strong yet, which made her imaginative and unreasonable. Was she not surrounded with everything to make her happy, — a beautiful house, delightful society, and the means to gratify her slightest desire? Woodbury was engrossed in his election, and that explained his absent-mindedness, his indifference. How glad she was he had got the nomination. She would apply herself to learn all about such things, and surprise him some day with her knowledge. The idea of her future proficiency caused her to smile in the midst of her tears, — which trickled down the faster, like a shower when the sun has burst through the clouds. She took out her handkerchief from her pocket, and, as she wiped her eyes, a tiny worsted sock dropped upon her lap. She picked it up and kissed it. Baby's! Dear little baby, — *his* baby. There, at least, she had a cause of happiness, — a treasure that she could love, and that would love her.

Hark! She heard steps. Her father and Woodbury had left the dining-room. They must not see that she had been crying. How childish she was! She hurried to the mirror, and rubbed vigorously her cheeks where the tear-stains glistened.

"Eh, Isabel?"

The banker was alone, and advanced rubbing his hands with an amused, sly expression. "They've come for him. There's a raft of them in the hall."

"Who've come, pa?"

"The boys — the strikers. I mean, there's a

deputation from the voters of the district here to see Stoughton."

"What do they want of him?"

"To subscribe to a benevolent society, I guess;" and the magnate chuckled.

"Well, he will, pa, won't he?"

"Can't tell, my dear. Your husband is a civil-service reformer, you know." The old man laughed scornfully.

Isabel had very indefinite ideas as to the precise functions of a civil-service reformer. She had seen the term in the papers, and always associated it from the etymology, with some improvement in politics. But then her father, from his tone, evidently did not agree with Woodbury on the question. They always disagreed about politics. She wished it were not so.

"Do you think Woodbury will be elected, pa?"

"It's hard to tell, Isabel. You know I'm on the other side, and bound to think not. I'm a Hunker Democrat, and Stoughton's a Dyed-in-the-wool Republican." He glanced stealthily at the girl. It delighted him to tease her a little.

"I know, pa," she said ruefully; "but you won't have to vote against him?"

"I never voted the Republican ticket in my life."

"Oh, well; once would n't make any difference. Besides, you want to have him elected, don't you?" She had drawn a footstool close to her father's chair, and sat with her blue eyes looking up at him beseechingly.

He smiled banteringly, and smoothed the golden hair with his hand.

"I wish I were a man," she exclaimed, with a toss of her head. "I would go out and make people vote for him." She laughed; but a defiant light shone in her face, that brought out more vividly the likeness to her parent.

"I believe you would, Isabel. That was my style," he added. "I stumped the State for Buchanan in '56." He paused a minute, in proud remembrance of his past exploits; then went on to narrate an incident of how he had once circulated a ballot at the polls, which was printed in such a way as to mislead people into thinking they were voting against his candidate.

As Mr. Idlewild reached the close of his anecdote, Stoughton entered the room with an absorbed expression. He was in evening dress; his hair was parted in the middle. His appearance was that of the refined and cultivated gentleman. His figure had filled out of late, and the contour of his cheeks perhaps suggested that he lived a little too well.

The banker looked up, at his step. "Well, did you fix things all right?"

"How do you mean?"

"They wanted money, did n't they?"

"Yes, I believe so."

His son-in-law's laconic replies rather disconcerted Peter Idlewild. The old man sat smiling in sarcastic silence, with his hand resting on Isabel's

head, now and again mechanically patting her hair. She looked inquiringly from the one to the other.

Stoughton advanced moodily to the fireplace, and stood with his back to the grate, leaning against the mantel. "They're a fine crowd," he muttered presently,—almost savagely. "They called themselves the *Independent Ballot Boys*, and declared they all wanted to vote for me, but would like to know my views on certain points. I said, 'Walk in, gentlemen,' and ordered Pierson to bring up some wine. There were seven of them, and they looked like some sort of mechanics. A little fellow with a brown beard and ferret eyes did the talking. He said he believed the chances were first-rate, and that the party would poll a big vote. He'd heard I was a good Republican, and was sound on all the leading questions. I replied that I thought I was, and told Pierson to pass round the champagne. 'Here's to Mr. Stoughton, boys,' piped the little man, 'and may he come out at the head of the poll!' They all drank their *fizz* contentedly, with the exception of one customer,—a big chap, with a frame like a blacksmith, who seemed uneasy until he got a tumbler from the sideboard, into which he poured the contents of his wine-glass."

"The horrid creature!" said Isabel.

"After they had finished there was an awkward pause. They showed no disposition to move, and I did n't know exactly what to say. Several eyes were turned towards the spokesman, who coughed once or twice, as if at a loss how to proceed.

'We're poor men, Mr. Stoughton,' he said at last, with a meaning leer. As I pretended not to understand, he added with more emphasis: 'We can't afford to vote for nothing. We thought perhaps, sir, you'd feel disposed to contribute a trifle towards helping your friends; our sassiety's in need o' funds,' and he winked knowingly. 'You mean,' said I, 'that you want me to pay you for voting for me?' 'That's about the size of it, mister!' exclaimed the blacksmith; and with the words he emptied the rest of the bottle into his tumbler."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Isabel.

"Well?" said Peter Idlewild, as his son-in-law remained silent.

"Of course I told them they'd mistaken their man, and that I would not contribute a cent for such a purpose. I said I believed in honest methods in politics, and that, though I should be glad to have their support, I must decline to pay money for votes. They listened to me in a sort of grim silence. 'We're very sorry that those are your views, Mr. Stoughton,' said the spokesman at last. I answered that I was very sorry, too, not to be able to accede to their demands. 'Well, I suppose there ain't much use in our staying any longer.' As they filed out, I heard the blacksmith mutter defiantly: 'That fixes you. The aristocrat as is n't willing to help an honest man to get a living won't have any vote of mine. Come on, boys.'"

The old man laughed. "I know the crowd. I caught a glimpse of them in the hall. That big fellow was Tim Leahy, one of the most notorious

strikers in the district. You'd better have given them a couple of hundred dollars."

The young man replied that he did not consider it right. He was pledged to the reform cause.

"Well, I guess they'll find others who won't be so particular. An election's an election, and what'll your civil-service reform amount to if you don't come out ahead? I warrant Finchley won't let them go off empty-handed."

"I dare say!"

"But you would n't have Woodbury do anything he considers wrong, pa?"

"Fudge!" said the banker. "You're cutting your own throat," he went on to say, addressing the young man. "You'll only have yourself to blame if they slaughter you at the polls. I was talking to Alderman Dunn yesterday, and he declared you needed every vote you could get in order to win. I tell you, there's nothing lost by being smart in this world, and making the most of your opportunities."

After Mr. Idlewild was gone, Stoughton walked up and down the room with a preoccupied air for some minutes. He wheeled up an armchair to the hearth, and, stretching his legs out on the fender, contemplated his pumps and dainty silk stockings.

"Woodbury?"

"Well?"

"I don't mind your smoking here."

There was another silence, and Isabel rose and changed her seat to one beside her husband. She

put her arm about his neck, and pressed her cheek against his. "Arthur Remington was here this afternoon," she said presently. "He thinks baby is the image of pa."

"Humph!"

"Of course, dear, I'd rather have him look like you than anybody; but if it is n't to be you, I'm glad it's pa." She was still a moment. "I'm dreadfully sorry you are worried, Woodbury."

He knocked his pumps together irritably. Presently he freed himself from her embrace, with a restless twist of his shoulders, and sat up straight in his chair. "I believe I *will* smoke, Isabel;" and he took a cigar from his vest pocket, and proceeded to notch its end with an ingenious gilt bawble that dangled from his watch-chain.

"How cute!" she exclaimed. "I have never seen that before. Where did you get it?" and she leaned forward to examine the guillotine-like movement of the bit of jewelry.

"Gerald Pumystone gave it to me yesterday. It's the latest wrinkle from Paris."

He smoked in reflective silence, while the young wife sat leaning back, with her hands clasped behind her head, gazing at him.

"Do you suppose the men who were here to-night will really vote against you?"

Stoughton frowned slightly. He drew his cigar from between his teeth, and studied the lighted end. "I don't know, Isabel," he answered briefly.

Five minutes passed, and no word was spoken.

A log of the wood-fire broke with a sputter on the hearth. Isabel rose and said she was going to bed.

"Good-night, Woodbury!" She kneeled down beside his chair. He took her cheeks between his hands, and gazed into her face. "You look a little tired, dear, to-night. You must be careful of yourself. How does the new nurse work?"

The tears started to her eyes. "I wish — I wish, Woodbury, you would try to tell me a little more about yourself. I'm sure I could understand very soon." A drop fell upon her cheek, which she hastened to brush away. "I'm very foolish, I know, but I do love you so much!"

"Certainly, certainly, Isabel! I will tell you anything you desire." The young man stroked her hair affectionately. This outburst puzzled him. "Another week will see an end to this plaguy election, and then I shall have more time."

"I don't mean to bother you, Woodbury," she exclaimed piteously.

"Of course not! I know that, dear." He raised her from the floor, and kissed her kindly. "You are tired. Your nerves are not strong yet."

He led her to the staircase. She turned and looked at him, half timidly, as if to implore forgiveness; then, as their eyes met, she buried her face upon his breast. He clasped her in a close embrace.

"Ah, Woodbury!" she murmured, "you will always love me, won't you?"

"Always, Isabel." As she raised toward him her glistening lashes, he pressed two or three reassuring kisses upon her brow. He watched her ascend the stairs, turning at the landing to smile at him once more ere she vanished. "Good-night, dear ; sleep soundly !" he said.

Stoughton resumed his seat by the hearth, and sat long, gazing at the smouldering embers. His lips were tightly compressed, and there was a yearning, sorrowful look in his eyes. His thoughts were busy. Perchance pity was there for the wife he did not love, and remorse for the suffering of which he was the cause. Perchance also, in that wealth of affection she had betrayed for him, he caught a glimpse of the happiness once within his grasp, and thrown away forever. He too might have thrilled with such a passion, had he but been steadfast. He, too, might have felt for another a love as fervent as that squandered by this poor child upon him ; but he had preferred the seen to the unseen, and sacrificed the eternal for that which was sure to perish. There are moments when even the glowing consciousness of material prosperity, and the carefully argued-out conviction that a comfortable egoism is the summit of philosophy pale before the light of the captive spirit, still struggling to aspire, like the long, thin flame of a dying candle.

The expression of Woodbury Stoughton's face changed by degrees to a grave tranquillity. He sighed once or twice, then rose from his chair. He

shook himself, and arranged his cravat in the mirror over the mantel-piece. "Half-past ten. Humph!" He built up the wood fire, and stood with his back to it, warming his legs. He was thinking again.

"I wonder," said he, presently, "if I had n't better have given those fellows something?"

He sighed once more, and, choosing a volume from the table, composed himself to read. The book was a French novel — Feuillet's "*L'Histoire d'une Parisienne*" — which Mrs. Tom Fielding had informed him was excellent.

XII.

EASTER! The sun has risen bright and clear to greet the Christian festival, and now at high noon shines down with dancing light on the throng that fills the streets, returning home from the churches. Ever eager and restless, but with a lighter step than yesterday, as if the fresh hope welling up in the heart had given wings to their feet, the crowd pour along the pavements. Happy-looking maidens, gay with new bonnets and blushing roses at their belts, trip past in the company of spick-and-span young men, neatly gloved, and conscious of their canes. Children flock by in merry prattle, for all the March wind that whirls about their curls at the street corners, and threatens the pride of the lilies in their little hands. It is not spring yet ; so at least bethinks the grand-sire, buttoning against the chilly gust the overcoat he had let dangle open,—not averse perhaps to giving the rising generation a peep of the fancy waistcoat in fashion when the Battery was the terrace of fashion, and Canal Street marked the boundary of civilization. Here and there, amid the passers, the flowing veil that speaks of recent sorrow

shrouds face and figure. Those wearing them, if alone, walk hurriedly, as if eager to escape the whisper of recognition ; others, resting upon some protecting arm, move cumbrous and slow. The music of the bells floats down from the steeples. In the windows of many a solemn mansion the *Lilium candidum* towers chaste and stately between the drawn-back shutters. *Manibus o date lilia plenis.* To-day is the anniversary of the hope of humanity.

Tripping with the rest down the steps of the small chapel where she is wont to worship, comes Dorothy Crosby, clasping her prayer-book, and the snowy calla given her by one of her Sunday-school scholars. Her earnest face is still eloquent with the influences of the hour. Thrilled yet thoughtful, she has heard the sweet and holy cadences of the service, and listened once more to that wondrous story upon which the Christian faith reposes. *Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me.*

A light hand touches her shoulder. She turns, and with an ecstatic "My dear !" beams upon Florence Lawton a radiant smile ; then grasps and squeezes her fingers with mysterious rapture.

"I'm so glad, Florence," she whispers. "It was so nice of you to send me word."

"Is n't it exciting? I was just crazy to tell you at the Tremaines' last Thursday, but Mr. Lattimer had n't told his relations, and he declared his great-aunt would alter her will if she heard of the engagement from any one but him. Don't speak of it until to-morrow, will you, Dorothy?"

"Of course not, dear."

"I'm so afraid it will get out to-day. I made Mr. Lattimer go to a different church this morning, on purpose to put people off the scent; but I'm sure it has leaked out. Old Miss Bell simpered at me all through the service, just as if she knew of it."

Miss Lawton, with a parting nod of enigmatic delight, whisked into her coupé.

"Good-morning, Miss Crosby."

The voice was Arthur Remington's. He stood smiling at her side, and asked if she were going to walk home.

"Yes, I believe so." Dorothy blushed a little, and glanced down at the bunch of red roses in her corsage. "I have not seen you for some weeks, Mr. Remington."

No. He had been busy, very busy. His time was taken up with politics, in addition to his practice. Had she read in the papers how much progress the reformers had been making?

"Oh, yes; I take a great interest in all that sort of thing now. I have become tremendously industrious this winter. I belong to a debating club! Only think, we discussed last week *the tendencies of modern civilization*, and decided that the women of the present day were superior, as a whole, to the men. What have you to say to that, Mr. Remington?"

"I dare say you're right. You see, the men have to work so hard to make money, it is n't altogether their fault."

They walked on in silence for a moment or two. "It was very kind of you to send me these lovely flowers, Mr. Remington," she said softly.

"I'm glad you liked them." He went on to say that the roses were very fine this year.

"These are exquisite. What a pity they must fade!" And she fingered for an instant one of the deep-red Jacqueminots.

"That is the fate of everything," he said, a little sententiously.

She was quiet a moment. "I don't believe, Mr. Remington, that anything in the world which is beautiful can really perish, do you? Things change, but I cannot think they die. That was interesting, what the clergyman said as to coal being merely bottled-up sunshine, and that no force is ever lost." She was thinking of the words she had just heard at church. The preacher, as if in echo of the doubt concerning the supernatural agencies of the resurrection, which the young girl could not completely banish from her thoughts, had led his hearers to dwell on the immortality of good work in the world, rather than linger with the Saviour at the tomb. His influence lived and would never die. *Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me.*

"Yes." It was difficult to talk connectedly, owing to the constant passing and the bewilderment of recognizing their acquaintances. They proceeded down the avenue towards Dorothy's home in an absorption varied by occasional commonplace remarks.

The thick-set man with the light-buff coat, who bowed, was Mr. Finchley, Woodbury Stoughton's colleague in the legislature. Yes, he was the person who was said to have been so much in love with Miss Idlewild before her engagement.

"I went to see Mrs. Stoughton the other day," observed Miss Crosby. "She is stouter than she was, and less refined-looking, I thought. I found her reading the Congressional Record, or Debates, —or whatever you call the journal in which the speeches made at Washington are printed. Was n't it a funny idea? I suppose it's because her husband is so much interested in politics."

"There is some talk of sending Stoughton to Congress another year." Remington frowned slightly as he spoke, for his thoughts momentarily reverted to the stories he had heard lately regarding the attentions of his friend to Mrs. Fielding. Stoughton was said to be constantly at her house. He himself had noticed their deliberate isolation at parties, and had met them several times in the street, walking together.

"You will come in and take luncheon with us, I hope, Mr. Remington," said Dorothy, as they reached the house in Washington Square. The young man assented, and followed her up the flight of stone steps, with its old-fashioned iron railing, capped with brass. She led the way into the small parlor. "I shall leave you for a few minutes to your own devices;" and she vanished with a pleasant smile.

Remington placed his hat on the table, and sat looking before him with his hands in his lap, the tips of the fingers of one resting against those of the other. He had made up his mind to ask Miss Crosby again to become his wife. The waverings and self-scrutiny of the past months had culminated, the evening before, in a conviction that he loved her dearly, and a resolve to tell her so once more. What might be her feelings regarding him, he was at a loss to decide. She had married no one else, at least, and he knew she was fond of him as a friend. She had indicated as much as that in various ways the past year. Still he could not feel certain. Very possibly she did not care for anybody sufficiently to marry.

In his more youthful days, as has been said, before he understood himself, and when these maturer developments of character were as yet in embryo, the vague but entrancing ideal of an all-absorbing love had been constantly present to him. To realize this had been the dream of his early manhood. There had been a time when his sentiment for Miss Crosby approached that complete frenzy of feeling which makes everything in creation, save the personality in question, seem subsidiary and stale. Then, even before he had asked her to become his wife and she refused him, the intensity of this instinct of pure nature had begun to wane, under the materializing influences of daily life. How difficult it had become for him in the matter of his relation to the other sex, as in everything else, to retain his

hold upon ideality! What was marriage, after all, but a convention? The choice of a wife should be governed by considerations of utility. Mutual esteem was a desirable prerequisite, and affection would follow later. The fervor of unreasoning, passionate love belonged to extreme youth, and was incompatible with the more sober mental processes of maturity. When a wife died, a man commonly consoled himself with another. The marriage tie was but a human compact, looking to the maintenance of the family system upon which society is founded.

This was the same old basis of argument that had presented itself so often to his mind in relation to everything in life. In the case of sentiment, as in all else, he had found himself between two conflicting fires. Here, too, he had wavered and vacillated, and only after protracted inward debate come to distrust with his whole heart the specious philosophy of materialism.

He would be true to himself. He loved Dorothy with all his heart. She was his ideal of all that a woman should be. He was poor, but he had practice enough now to enable him to support a wife in a very simple way, and he was not going to renounce the hope of winning her he loved without one more effort. Time enough when she had refused him to reflect that he would get over it. Time enough when she was out of the question to think about marrying a rich girl who would make him comfortable for life. He knew that he should find

in her sympathy and right-mindedness the greatest blessing life could give.

He sat in the little parlor, in that nervous yet deliberate state peculiar to one who has resolved upon a step that will affect his entire future. Now that he had definitely made up his own mind, the doubts as to what Miss Crosby's feelings might be harassed him disagreeably. Why did she not come? He arose and began to pace the room. He stopped before the mantel-piece, and examined the ornaments and photographs thereon, with which he was already familiar. His eye fell on a tintype of a group taken at Bar Harbor two summers ago. Miss Crosby was among the number. She wore a black fichu about her neck, and her Japanese sun-umbrella was jauntily carried over her shoulder. He was sitting at her feet. How desperate he was about her then! Ramsay Whiting had seemed to him to have the inside track. That reminded him, — he had heard, the night before, a rumor that Lattimer was engaged to Florence Lawton. He wondered if it was true. Miss Crosby would be sure to know. Why did n't she come?

The door opened and Dorothy reappeared. "You must excuse me, Mr. Remington, for keeping you so long. Mamma has a headache and needed me."

Remington suggested that as Mrs. Crosby was not feeling well, perhaps he had better take his departure. "I shall rely upon your sending me away if you don't want me," he continued, in response to her assurance that she was quite at liberty.

"Very well. I hope you can carve," she added, with a laugh; "for I always depend on mamma to cut the cold chicken."

Remington stood leaning against the mantel-piece with the tintype still in his hand. She evidently felt, he reflected, that they were on an entirely friendly footing, or she would never have been privy to a *tête-à-tête* luncheon. "I used to carve a good deal at college," he answered. She wore one of his roses still; that was something.

He turned the tintype toward the light and scrutinized it. "Miss Plumber looks in this as if she had lost her last friend. What a funny girl she was! I believe, though, you didn't see very much of her," he said, looking up. "I was obliged to solace myself with her society for want of better. By the way, I hear Mr. Lattimer is engaged to Miss Florence Lawton."

"Oh, who told you?" and then, as the young man laughed gleefully at the success of his strategy, Dorothy gave utterance to several ejaculations deprecatory to herself for having let the cat out of the bag in such an unguarded way. "Oh," she cried, "I am a perfect sieve. But it was base of you, Mr. Remington. I don't see how you could have been willing to deceive me. Of course I thought you knew all about it."

"Well, he's a lucky fellow."

"I think they are both lucky. Mr. Lattimer is a very nice man."

"Yes, he is. Lattimer is a good fellow." Rem-

ington spoke a little as if he were conscious of magnanimity. "You know him very well, I believe, Miss Crosby. I remember you saw a good deal of him that summer at Bar Harbor."

"Yes. We are quite intimate. He used to play the banjo beautifully. We had some amusing evenings together on the water. Let me see, that was nearly three years ago. How time flies!" She was pensive a moment. "I think luncheon is ready, Mr. Remington," she said presently.

Miss Crosby presided over the cups and saucers at the head of the table, but the cold chicken was placed so that the guest should not sit at the foot. The meal was a tranquil one. Remington, who was hungry, ate with relish; but Dorothy confined herself to a cup of tea and thin bread and butter.

"You eat nothing, Miss Crosby," said the young man.

"Oh, yes, I am doing very well."

"You had better let me give you a piece of chicken." He raised a tempting slice of the breast on the fork.

She shook her head resolutely, as if impatient of dictation from him.

"I hope Mrs. Crosby's headache is not serious," he said, after a spell of silence.

"Oh, no. Mamma has them every now and then. If you have finished, Mr. Remington, we will go into the other room."

Dorothy sat down on a lounge; and, after a preliminary saunter toward his favorite fireplace, he

took his seat beside her. He picked up a photograph album from the table. "May I look at this?"

"Certainly."

"That is your father, I suppose?"

"Yes. He died when I was very young."

"It is an interesting face. You have his eyes and mouth."

"I am thought to be very like him. That is my mother's mother."

"Ah, this must be you! What a funny little tot! You could not have been more than five. And here is another—"

"Don't look at that. Please give me the book. I did n't know that hateful thing was there. Oh, how unkind!"

"It is n't flattering exactly, but I like it." Remington had insisted upon examining the photograph which portrayed his sweetheart at the age of sixteen, with a schoolgirl braid down her back. "You know that anything which concerns you interests me, Miss Crosby."

The words were spoken in a quiet, serious tone. Upon the next page was a likeness of her in full ball-dress, evidently of recent date. He sat bending forward, with his eyes fixed upon it for some minutes.

"When was that taken?"

"Last winter. But you have looked at it enough, Mr. Remington. The subject does n't interest me as a topic of conversation, and you are bound to

make yourself agreeable. How are you getting on at the law?" Dorothy had leaned back in her corner of the sofa, and met his gaze with self-possession.

"I would rather talk about you than anything else in the world." He paused an instant, fingering nervously the album which still lay open in his hands. He closed it, and placed it upon the table. "Miss Crosby," he murmured, leaning toward her, "I told you once, nearly three years ago, that I loved you. I don't know that I can add anything to what I said then; but I have loved you ever since, and love you still."

"Yes?" She sat quietly, with her hands clasped in her lap, looking straight before her.

"Do you know," he said, grasping her hand impetuously, "that I think you are the sweetest, loveliest woman in the world? I want you to be my wife, and help me to make my life all it should be."

She did not withdraw her fingers. She remained perfectly still, without meeting his glance.

"I have not the power to say all I feel. My words sound so harsh and cold; but, Dorothy, Dorothy,—I love you."

He looked up imploringly into her face.

"I think you do love me, Mr. Remington," she said, with a sweet smile. "It is very nice to be loved."

He covered her hand with eager kisses. She withdrew it softly. "Indeed, Mr. Remington, I

don't know what to say. I like you very much ;” and as she spoke she fondly gazed down into his eyes, — then drooped her own.

“ My darling ! ” His arm was about her waist, and he kissed her lips.

She freed herself gently from his embrace. “ No, no, you must not do that ! There are so many girls, Mr. Remington,” she murmured, “ who would make you happier than I should.”

He went on to tell her, in words which, though unchosen, must have been sweet to her ear, how much he revered her character, and how good and pure and lovely she was. She fulfilled his ideal of what woman ought to be.

She shook her head. “ That shows you know me very little, Mr. Remington.”

“ But you have consented, dearest, have you not ? ”

“ Have I ? ” She gave a little laugh, the banter of which breathed a joyous self-surrender. She was silent. Her brown eyes sought the floor and her lip trembled. “ Dear,” she said at last, looking up, — and the noble light in her face, that he knew so well, was as a star of morning, — “ you must be sure to love me with all your heart ; for if you should cease to care for me, I think I should die.”

It was evening, and the lovers sat alone in the dim firelight of the library. Mrs. Crosby had left them together. The latter's headache had been put to flight by the news of the engagement,

which was by no means repugnant to the maternal feelings. The good lady had indeed begun to be solicitous lest Dorothy might be so difficult to please that she would glide unwed into middle age. To be sure, she was not twenty-five yet; but, to a mother who has her daughter on her mind, this seems a mature period. There was no objection to Mr. Remington. His family was entirely unexceptionable; and if he was not rich, — well, she had come to see that one cannot arrange matters beyond a certain point. If Dorothy fancied him, there was nothing to be said. She had always suspected how it would end; so she announced at dinner, — despite the protestations of the blushing girl that she had never cared a straw until recently.

They sat without talking much; for, despite their happiness, it was difficult to realize their new relation. It was all so strange. The mind of each was busy with thought. In moments like these one sighs for a glimpse behind the veil of eternity. Who can wholly shut out the spectres of time and change, old age and death, from the blissful vision of a perfect joy? The shrouded figure which waits for all, stands at the end of the vista; and with the reawakening to the reality of life come the old doubts and questionings. Does marriage mean aught but a comfortable compact for the sharing of houses and lands and tears and laughter in common? The ecstasy we feel is a delusion that will die away after a few weeks. Already we feel calm

and collected; and even if she were to be taken from us to-morrow, would we die of grief?

"Was that true, what you said about not having cared for me at all until lately?" asked Remington, beseechingly.

"I don't know anything about it," she replied, with a coquettish laugh. "It seems to me that every idea I ever had is gone. I feel as if I could never put confidence in myself again. Don't you think," she said presently, "I've made a dreadful mistake?"

The young man pressed her hand tenderly. "God grant that you may never have cause to regret it, Dorothy!"

There was a short silence. "I am sure I never shall," she murmured sweetly and firmly.

"Arthur," she said, after a moment, — and she pronounced his name as if the self-abandonment which its use implied still seemed a weakness, — "how strange it all is! I really know you so little! Do you remember," she asked, "the conversation we had three years ago, at Mrs. Idlewild's?" She went on to explain that they had talked of religion and the purposes of life. "This is Easter, and I do not like to feel, dear, that we think differently regarding such things."

He did not reply for a while. "I was younger then, Dorothy, than I am to-day, and my ideas have changed somewhat. As you say, we are not perhaps wholly at one regarding the questions of which you speak. Yet who really knows more than an-

other about the meaning of life? Who dares take it upon himself, in the face of the wondrous phenomena of this vast universe, to forecast the nature of the unseen? No one can tell what is to become of us after death; future existence is only a hope. But still, Dorothy my darling," and he clasped her in his arms as he spoke, "whatever else is true or false, you and I are conscious that there is a power somewhere, transcending human thought, which draws our spirits upwards. We know not what it is; we cannot grasp it; but it exists,—does it not, dear one?—and is a part of our being, though we at times deny it. Is it possible that the sole answer to this beautiful world, to all its joy and sorrow, its prayers and aspirations, is merely annihilation? Oh, it cannot be that this love which we have pledged to one another forever, the kisses of our lips, are but new toys for death to mock at. Nay, let us believe that we are more than puppets; let us have faith that the joy we feel to-day is given that we, through it, may learn to make our lives all that they should be. We know not what is to come; but this we know, that for you and me there can be no rest or happiness save in striving to conquer evil. For what is living well but strife and resistance? Is not human life a growth that thrives only through the conscious struggle of the spirit? And, my Dorothy, shall we not believe that the union of our souls, if we but love one another with all our hearts, will last forever?"

He pressed her to his breast with a fervent embrace. It may be that, even as he spoke, he was conscious of his old doubts and questionings, — even as one sees the fog-banks in summer, like light clouds, skirting the horizon's edge, and knows that they will gather with the twilight. But she, with a clinging tenderness, put her arms about his neck, and, drawing his face down to hers, murmured, as she gazed up into his eyes: "O Arthur, my love, with such a faith I will follow you to the end of the world."

XIII.

WOODBURY STOUGHTON sat in his office,—or rather offices, as he had exchanged the humble quarters he used to occupy for a set of rooms in a fine new building belonging to his father-in-law. He was now extremely well-to-do on his own account. His relationship to the magnate had been naturally the means of connecting him with various profitable enterprises,—to say nothing of the law business of a half-dozen large corporations, obtained through the same influence. He was, for instance, a director in the Selma & Peatville Air-line Railway,—a Southern road, generally supposed, until recently, to be on the verge of bankruptcy. Its stock had been kicking about on the market for about fourteen dollars a share, and at this figure a controlling interest in the property had been acquired by a syndicate, of which Peter Idlewild was the king-pin. The financial world awoke one morning to the discovery that the so-called worthless road had become an indispensable feeder to a high-priced trunk-line, and that its stock was valued at somewhere in the eighties. Stoughton's individual profit in the transaction was two

hundred thousand dollars, plus a fee of five thousand for legal services.

His air of well-fed prosperity had grown upon him. He was not too portly to appear spruce, and yet his figure had acquired much of the solid proportions of middle age. Around the ears his dark brown hair was very slightly streaked with silver-gray, a circumstance that was the occasion of amusement to himself and his friends.

It was early in October, and he had just returned from Newport, where his establishment had been one of the glories of the season. His career of two years in the Legislature had been a conspicuous one; though there was some diversity of opinion as to the sincerity of his attitude in regard to the question of political reform, of which, prior to election, he had announced himself the champion. There were reports current that he had secretly worked against certain bills calculated to upset the evil practices in vogue, alleging, when questioned regarding his indifference to the cause, that it would be quite impossible to carry out such measures in practice. They were admirable in theory, he said; but examination had convinced him of their lack of feasibility. He had, however, on several occasions, put himself on record as a supporter of the best legislation, being, in fact, the originator of a bill aimed at the directors of an institution notorious for its ill-treatment of the paupers there installed, and one of the most earnest advocates of the impeachment of Surrogate Baldwin, an official of the

opposite party, detected in peculations of the public funds. A leading Republican newspaper spoke of him as "a rising young man, well fitted to take a prominent place in the councils of the nation." "Mr. Woodbury Stoughton," wrote an evening contemporary, "whose philippic against laxity of morals in public life appears elsewhere in our columns, is the son-in-law of Honorable Peter Idlewild, the well-known Wall Street banker and millionaire. Mr. Stoughton is a fine-appearing man, in the neighborhood of thirty, with a commanding presence and impressive fluency of speech. He was educated at Harvard, and, after enjoying the advantages of foreign travel, apprenticed himself to the law. There is much consolation for those apprehensive concerning the future of American politics to note the accession to the ranks of our legislators of one so well qualified for the duties of office. The voters of the district could scarcely do a wiser thing than send Mr. Stoughton as their representative to Congress a year hence. His speech in the Assembly yesterday was straight from the shoulder." Such eulogy, relieved by the abuse of certain party organs on the Democratic side, had given Stoughton considerable prestige among his social acquaintances. It was common to hear him spoken of as "that young Stoughton who is behaving so well at Albany." Young ladies who affected politics would ask their admirers if Mr. Woodbury Stoughton had not been doing splendidly. There were those, to be sure, as has been said, who were by no means

so enthusiastic on his account. In fact, it was an open secret that Ramsay Whiting and the Civil Service Association regarded him askance.

Stoughton's lukewarm attitude in the matter of the reform measures previously alluded to had done much to antagonize this element ; but he had damaged himself still further in their eyes by the course he pursued, in the latter part of the session, in regard to the Leadbitter Water-meter Company Bill. The affair in question was a job that certain parties were trying to engineer through the Assembly, of which the purpose was to give an iniquitous charter to a corporation controlling the patents of one Charles Leadbitter. The bulk of the stock of this concern was held by some of the leading Republican politicians, who announced their intention to ruin the future of such representatives of the party as should oppose the passage of the bill ; which, though harmless enough on its face, had been discovered by the Democratic lawyers to conceal the germ of several large fortunes, to be realized at the expense of the community. The latent possibilities of the scheme, as laid bare by this minority report of the committee, were taken up by the hostile press throughout the State. Public sentiment became aroused ; and petitions were circulated urging the Assembly members of both parties to vote against the granting of the charter. A committee of the Civil Service Reform Association waited upon Stoughton, and represented to him the dangerous character of the proposed legislation. He

promised that he would do what he could. He agreed with the remonstrants, of course, as to the importance of defeating the bill ; but he said that, what with bribes offered for Democratic votes, and the powerful personal influence of the politicians interested, the chances of success seemed slight to him. Nevertheless it was noised abroad that Mr. Woodbury Stoughton would speak against the bill. So great was the opposition developed that the friends of the measure found it advisable to call in the aid of the party managers. One morning, a few days before the debate, the Honorable Cornelius French made his appearance at Albany ; and thereafter a remarkable change came over the temper of the lobby. There was much talk to be heard about the importance of harmony, and the need of keeping a solid front against the enemy. Certain men were reported to have been whipped into line. It began to be whispered that neutrality was all that was required of those unwilling to cast their votes in favor of the bill. When the appointed day arrived, the obnoxious charter passed the House by a good working-majority. The speeches made against it seemed to hang fire for the most part, — the only really effective bit of oratory coming from Eugene Finchley, who saw fit to draw upon his head the maledictions of his party by denouncing the bill, in a carefully prepared argument, as “one of the most gigantic frauds ever brought before the legislature of this State.” As for Stoughton, he was not present. A sudden telegram had demanded

his attendance in New York upon important business, an incident upon which the Democratic press did not fail to advert with abundant satire. It was not many weeks later that an item appeared in the leading newspapers to the effect that Mr. Woodbury Stoughton was certain to receive the party nomination for Congress in the autumn, to fill the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of the Honorable Hugh Collamore, "who finds his duties as the treasurer of the Leadbitter Water-meter Company inconsistent with the demands of public life."

The result had justified the prophecy. It was now some ten days since Stoughton had been nominated. The convention for the purpose had been harmonious and enthusiastic. It was considered a shrewd choice on the part of the managers, for the reason that, while the record of the young man would attract the disaffected, he was sufficiently in sympathy with the party to bring out the popular vote. This, at least, had been the logic of that political sphinx Corny French, and others who did not disguise their anxiety concerning the issue of this year's fight throughout the State and country. They were quite aware that their party had indisputably failed to keep the pledges made a year ago, and the rumblings audible in the political atmosphere were ominous of disaster. The well-known faculty which the Democratic party possessed of upsetting its own cart, just when victory seemed assured, was, however, to be borne in mind. The Honorable Hugh Collamore announced

to a select audience of chiefs, in a summing up of the situation, that he had "seen sicker children live." If all the nominations to be made were as unexceptionable as that of his successor, defeat might still be averted. It was considered that this district was assured, at any rate.

The wisest plans of politicians, as well as those of other people, are liable to disappointment. Within the last forty-eight hours a bombshell had been cast into the party fold, by the nomination, at a large gathering of Independent voters, of Eugene Finchley,—as the standard-bearer of the reform element in the Congressional contest,—and his subsequent indorsement by the Democrats. The movement was entirely unsuspected by Stoughton, who had been confident of the support of the Independent following. He had been aware of the hostility of Ramsay Whiting and a few others, but had supposed himself "solid" with the faction as a whole. The news caused him much annoyance, for it put a new face on the situation. It would require desperate efforts to overcome the combination arrayed against him, especially as he had taken the stand that he would not use money in improper ways during the canvass. He could not see what he had done to merit the distrust of the Whiting party, which had been openly expressed at the meeting. His name had been mentioned with eulogy by several speakers, and his friends—for he had his partisans there, and even now need not despair of obtaining a portion of the Independent

vote upon election-day — had worked strenuously in his behalf ; but a caustic, clear exposition of his course in the Assembly, presented by Ramsay Whiting and confirmed by others of equal weight, had resulted in his rejection by the convention. Finchley, too, of all men ! He had supposed that the broker's previous fondness for manipulation at caucuses would stand in his way ; but, then, there was no denying that his colleague had been winning golden opinions of late, from the soundness of his views on important questions. Finchley had grown rich, also, and promised to become a power down town. It was clear to him now that he had acted with vast indiscretion regarding the Water-meter Bill. It was the resolute position taken by Finchley in that affair which had obtained the latter the nomination. Whether Finchley's conduct had been sincere or not, there was no doubt that it was clever as a political move. He had wondered at his colleague's change of base, and had even flattered himself that the other was overdoing the reform business ; but the result showed the inaccuracy of his own figuring.

As he sat in his private office this morning, reflecting on the complications caused by this move of the enemy, the door opened, and a clerk inquired if he would see Mr. Dunn.

"Certainly ! Show him in."

It was now some days since the action of the Reform Convention, but the Democrats had made their nomination only the evening before. Mr.

Dunn was in charge of the Stoughton boom. The young man had decided to rely upon the long experience of this politician in the management of his canvass.

"Good-morning, Mr. Alderman."

The visitor advanced with outstretched hand, his head on one side, and much of the solemn condolence of manner that one adopts toward a friend who has suffered bereavement.

"Well, Dunn, they rather went for me last night," continued Stoughton, with a laugh. "That makes a strong combination."

The fugleman assented by a nod of his head. He took a chair, and passed his hand thoughtfully over his seamy chin. "It's a bad business," he said, with a caressing whisper that suggested the vicinity of the corpse. "I did n't suppose those chaps would be shrewd enough to take up Finchley. There's one thing about it, though, — the old line Democrats are madder than blazes. I was talking with Clint Pilcher this morning, and he says that he'd rather vote the Republican ticket out-and-out, than a bastard one like this."

"We must try and work that up."

"Sh! 'We're not dead yet,' as the fox said when he left his tail in the trap. But it's got to be business this time. We can't afford to fool round any." There was a stealthy gleam in Mr. Dunn's eyes.

"No, of course not. I was thinking it would n't be a bad plan to send out a circular, calling the attention of the Democratic voters of the district

to Finchley's early record. A pretty Democrat he is!"

The alderman edged his chair a little closer to the young man's desk. "This is n't going to be a fight where circulars 'll do any good. I would n't give two cents for all the votes you will gain in that way. Look at here; I've had some experience in this sort of thing. I'm no chicken, Mr. Stoughton, as you 'll perhaps allow. We've got to have votes to win; and if we don't get them, the other side will."

Mr. Dunn paused, and looked at the other inquiringly. He was evidently satisfied that he had made his meaning sufficiently clear.

But Stoughton did not rise to the occasion. He replied that they must put in solid work, of course, — that it would be necessary to have some enthusiastic rallies, with speeches and music.

"Rallies be blowed! We'll leave those to the Reformers," said Mr. Dunn; and he gave a hoarse laugh. "What's got to elect you is money; and the sooner we recognize that, the better. I tell you," said he, and he lowered his voice and looked around as if to make sure there was no one in the room but themselves, "there's no use in mincing matters; the fellow that's got the longest purse is bound to win. I've only to give the word that the cash will be forthcoming, to secure a thousand votes which will otherwise go against us. We've got the cards in our hand if we play them right, but there's no time to be wasted."

"You know I do not believe in buying votes, Dunn," said Stoughton, drumming nervously with his fingers on the desk. "It's against my principles."

The other coughed slightly behind his hand, and was silent.

"Of course I'm ready—and expect—to pay the legitimate expenses of the canvass; but it would n't do for me to go beyond that."

"There's no need of your being known in the matter in any way. All you have to do is to hand me over a check, and that's the end of it so far as you're concerned. If anything is said, it's simple enough to put the blame off on your friends. You're in the hands of your friends, and are not responsible for what they may have done." The speaker grinned with a sense of relish. "I saw Tim Leahy this noon," continued the politician, "and he says Finchley has taken headquarters at the Mohawk House, and is ready to do the square thing by the boys. I tell you, Mr. Stoughton, when it comes to politics, sentimental notions are n't good for much. As the youngster said, when he picked up the five-dollar bill in church, 'Profits for this world, and prayers for the next.'"

Stoughton smiled. "Finchley'll have to be mighty careful how he pays out money. If the Reformers get wind of it, he's beaten."

Mr. Dunn wagged his head sagely. "Trust him for that. It's no fool you've got to buck against in Finchley. What Steve Doran, who's running

that fight, does n't know about the business, ain't worth knowing. But we've got them this time," he whispered hoarsely, "if we set about it in the right way. You see, as I was saying, the leaders are mad, and won't support Finchley with any enthusiasm. What we want is, to get those fellows to promise not to work against us. We're all right if we can make the machine stand still, as Joshua did the moon,—if you believe it, which I don't;" and the speaker, pleased by his facetiousness, nudged Stoughton.

The young man rose, and paced the room for some minutes. "How much do you need?" he asked, suddenly turning toward his henchman.

The other rubbed his chin, which was a favorite gesture with him, by way of assisting reflection.

"Thirty thousand will see you through, I guess."

Stoughton whistled. "That's a big sum," he said.

"Yes, for some folks, maybe," replied Mr. Dunn, with a philosophical air. "It is n't every man that can afford to go to Congress. Things in this world cost money, and people won't work for nothing. But what do you care for thirty thousand?" he added, with his caressing smile; "you could stand a hundred without feeling it, Mr. Stoughton."

The aspirant for Congressional honors continued to walk the office in silence. He frowned and pursed his lips. At last he sat down at his desk again.

"Look a' here, Dunn," he said, with a nervous

decision of tone, and gazing directly at the other; "I've gone into this fight to win, and do not intend to let a few thousand dollars stand in the way of success. I'll be responsible for all the money you have to spend; but, mind, I don't care to know any of the particulars. What I want is to come out ahead on election-day; it is for you to decide how that result is to be accomplished."

"Precisely," said the alderman; and then, by way of lubricating the situation, he observed, apologetically, that the only possible chance of a happy result lay in such a course. "It's depressing that things should be as they are, Mr. Stoughton, but 'human nature is human nature,' as my old grandmother Dunn used to say; and the man who acts on the belief that it's something different, will get left, every time. That's frozen truth."

Shortly after this pleasantry Mr. Dunn took his departure. Stoughton sat for some time lost in thought. He had impressed upon his henchman, at parting, the desirability of making things sure. Money was no object. If it was necessary to spend more, why spend it, and he would foot the bill. Now that he had decided to take the step, he was anxious that affairs should be managed thoroughly.

He was conscious of a certain loss of self-respect in what he had just done, which affected him unpleasantly; but experience had taught him that this would wear off. He was, after all, only doing what was done every day by candidates for office. With the existing tone of society, as Dunn said, it was

not possible to win an election without using money. It was necessary for him to choose whether he preferred defeat, or to pay out thirty or forty thousand dollars. There probably had not been a man sent to Congress for the past ten years, who had not been forced to spend more or less to get there.

He felt, too, a sense of bitterness at the action of the Reform Association. Since they had seen fit to call in question his political integrity, he would show them what slight influence they had in the community. He would beat them out of their boots; and, as they accused him of improper practices already, he might as well get the benefit as well as the ill-repute of such charges.

What annoyed him as much as anything was that Arthur Remington had come in, early this morning, to say he should not be able to work for him. His friend had said he was sorry to have come to this conclusion; but he could not, in face of the facts concerning the Leadbitter Bill and several other matters, feel that Stoughton sympathized with reform in politics. To be sure, Remington had gone on to observe, his own position was a delicate one, for he was a member of the State Central Committee; still he felt, all the same, at liberty to scratch any names on the ticket which he could not conscientiously support. Their interview had been friendly enough; that is to say, Stoughton had answered that the other must be his own judge of the merits of the candidates. If his conduct had not pleased the Reform party, he must

try to do the best he could without their votes. There were still a few, he thought, who had faith in him, — he had continued, with a grin. Of course he could not help feeling badly at his old friend's desertion ; but it would not in any way interrupt their relations, so far as he was concerned.

Nevertheless Stoughton was both angered and disturbed thereby. He had not seen nearly as much of Remington during the present year as in times past. They both had been very busy, and their ruts ran wider apart than formerly. Remington had been married several weeks. His friend seemed very happy. There was no question but that Miss Crosby was a charming girl. It was a love-match, and Remington's interest in her dated from his first winter in New York. He had always suspected how it would end, although Arthur was secretive about that sort of thing. They were likely to be comfortably off, for the latter had apparently got into a good practice. That fellow Ramsay Whiting had let Arthur into a lot of railroad business. Why, he wondered, had Whiting turned against him ? It was Whiting who had been most prominent in opposing his nomination. Well, since that was the way the cat jumped, he would see if he could n't make it warm for these fellows. He had never, as yet, failed in anything he undertook, and he did not propose to do so now. As for Arthur, he was sorry. He was fond of his friend ; but the latter's ideas, from away back in college days, had always been queer, — had never been practical.

Stoughton looked at his watch. It was three o'clock. He closed his desk, and put on his overcoat. He should not be back again to-day ; so he told his clerks. As he threaded his way along the crowded streets, toward the nearest elevated railway station, he was still thoughtful. With all his prosperity, and shrewd, comfortable philosophy, he was not quite contented nowadays. Not that he was unhappy, precisely ; he had too much vitality, too many means of diversion, for that. Nor did his conscience trouble him, for the most part. He had settled for himself, long ago, the perplexing questions that harassed his earlier manhood, — or, rather, dismissed them as insolvable. He sought to get as much pleasure out of life as was possible. His house was exquisitely arranged for comfort. He had beautiful pictures on his walls, his cook was a *chef* who left little to be imagined in the way of appetizing dinners, and his stables were among the best equipped in town. He followed sedulously the literature and drama of the day, in his own and foreign tongues, ambitious to maintain his prestige as one well versed in *belles lettres*. He went much into society, where he was courted for the graceful quality of his bearing and conversation. He was considered delightful, — by women, especially.

And yet there were times when the hours palled, — when, in fact, life seemed stale and insipid. He found himself less easily amused than formerly. His zest for things had diminished. He had become more and more incapable of enthusiasm. He had

read everything. Even the processes of money-making did not forcibly appeal to him. His relations with his wife had scarcely altered since a year ago. He was kind to her, and anxious to surround her with every luxury. It pleased him to have her cultivate society, and figure among the charming women of the day. But between them there was no sympathy. Isabel bored him. It was impossible for him to share his thoughts with her. She seemed to have recognized this of late, for she had ceased to agitate him with appealing glances and timid complaints. Her baby absorbed much of her time ; and, while harmonious, husband and wife went their respective ways.

There was, however, one interest that continued to engross his time more prominently than ever. His attentions to Mrs. Tom Fielding had blossomed into an intimacy which had not failed to cause comment in society circles. They had been seen much together at parties the previous winter, and latterly at Newport.

He sat this afternoon in the train, whirling along up town, leaning forward on his cane held between his knees. His fashionable dress, with all its refinements of close-fitting gloves and dove-colored gaiters, doubtless stirred the discontent of a dirty, rough-looking fellow opposite, for the latter scowled at him vindictively. Stoughton, scarcely conscious of being the object of the other's frown, reflected, in turn, that if *he* were so miserable a wretch he would blow his brains out. What was there in existence worth clinging to, for a poor devil like that ? His

old habit of speculation and theorizing was still sometimes active, and had acquired a deeper tinge of cynicism. He did not wonder that there were Socialists. Would he not be one himself if he was in the condition of his neighbor? But it was the very ignorance of the miserable classes, and their lack of insight into reality, that were the protection of society. Like huge beasts of burden, they were too stupid to appreciate their own strength. What a gigantic mockery, to think of the masses cajoled into submission by the specious superstition of duty, and a divine command! Let these creatures but learn the truth, — let them perceive, as he perceived, the irony of existence, — and chaos would come again.

Upon alighting from the train he went into the club for a few minutes, and then walked up Fifth Avenue. He rang at Mrs. Fielding's door. She was at home, the servant said; and as he entered the parlor she rose to receive him.

"How do you do to-day?" said he. He held her hand for an instant, and gazed into her face.

Mrs. Fielding resumed her seat on the sofa, and he took the vacant place beside her. She was dressed to go out. The room was curtained, so as to intercept the fullness of the daylight, and sweet with the fragrance of flowers. On a little table near by was a basket of exquisite hybrids, toward which she turned her eyes as an expression of thanks to him for having sent them.

She had been sorry to read in the papers this

morning that the Democrats had nominated Mr. Finchley. "Would that injure your chances very much? But then, you know," she continued with a smile, "your gain will be my loss; for if you go to Washington, I shall never see you."

She stood up as she spoke, and led the way to the door; for they had agreed to take a stroll this afternoon.

They directed their steps toward the Park, which was not far distant. There were as yet comparatively few of their acquaintances in town, and it was not difficult to lose themselves among the by-paths of that large pleasure-garden. It was one of those lovely days in early October, when Summer seems to cast a parting glance over her shoulder. The foliage, already touched by the brush of the sterner season, barely stirred in the balmy stillness. Birds hopped about the grass. The ponds glistened cool and tranquil, alluring loiterers to their granite margins.

They walked slowly, and with that sympathy of manner which is apt to be a part of the bearing of those not averse to giving the impression of intimacy. Stoughton, in speaking, bent a little toward his companion, who, with eyes which followed the windings of the path, listened pensively. Her closed sunshade dangled from her small, neat hands, and undulated with the movement of her skirt.

Theirs was a friendship that had been gathering force from day to day through many months. In

Mrs. Fielding the young man had found one who was able to understand and criticise the lines of thought most interesting to him. She had read much in a superficial way, and her native feminine cleverness made her seem to know more than she really did. Under the guise of literary comment the most interesting problems of humanity present themselves with facility for discussion. A common ground of books forms an attractive basis for the introduction of the philosophic and the subjective.

Of what was she thinking, this young and graceful woman, as she sauntered in the autumn sunshine by the side of him who was not her husband, within earshot of the stir of that society whose laws she was disregarding? She was pondering, as so many have done before her, upon the nature of the barrier that forbade her to give her heart to this man, for whose companionship she thirsted as the parched soil for the rain-cloud. She belonged to another. She had plighted her word to be the pure and faithful wife of one whom she no longer loved, whose very presence was a source of tedium to her. What did this mean? What was this tie that bound her to a being with whom she could not sympathize, — the so-called law of marriage, which prescribes that a man and woman, united by mutual vows, shall be true to each other until death? A cruel, unrelenting law, forsooth, that weighed upon her spirit as a yoke! Whence was its origin? It was the law of God, so men said. Had she not herself knelt at the altar and invoked the blessing

of the Almighty on her troth? Yes; and it had not prospered. She had come to feel aversion for the husband she had sworn to love and honor and obey. Did God indeed command her to endure this misery for the rest of her life? What was there, after all, to keep her from the arms of her lover, but a convention framed by men for the convenience of society?

To renounce the darling desire of her heart meant to live on in the bondage under which she writhed to-day. She could see the years of her future stretching out, a dry and dusty road which ended with the grave. She knew that they would have in store for her the hueless monotony of a loveless existence, relieved alone by the consolations of religion. Their joys would be patience and hope. If she chose this second path, it must be for the sake of resistance, and because she believed that in so doing she fulfilled the will of God, and that he required it of her. She would suffer in this world in the faith of a future happiness.

She saw, too, in the pathway of her desire the disapproval and ban of society, the disgrace which the world casts upon those who disobey its laws. But why should she care for the world's verdict? Would that be able to rob her of her happiness? Would she not, upon the bosom of him she adored, be able to mock its cry of censure? The world! What was the world? If, indeed, it was true, as she had learned sometimes to suspect, — as she had heard her lover whisper, — that this life was all,

that the veiled goal which bounded those two paths was the darkness of annihilation, why should she hesitate? If death was the cessation of conscious being, wherefore should she not pursue her happiness? Society was nought to her. It might crack and splinter into chaotic fragments, and she would not care. If the laws of right and wrong were merely a code to save the world from anarchy, let anarchy come.

She knew herself to be one endowed with the choicest human blessings. Those things which mankind prized and strove for most were hers in profusion. She possessed wealth and position. Her face and form were very beautiful. She could perceive the wide gulf that separated the intelligence of her thoughts from the struggling masses of humanity. From their superstitions and vulgarities she was far removed. The best that existence could afford to woman in the way of ambition and pleasure had been hers. Her life seemed to lack but one essential of happiness, and that lay within her grasp if she but willed. Without it, existence was a curse. What was this tyrant whose mandate, "Thou shalt not do this thing," stood between her and the realization of bliss?

Few would have guessed that the downcast eyes and coy smile of Ethel Fielding, as she strolled under the tree-shade, were the cloak of reflections which shook her spirit to its centre. These were questionings which had been her companions for many days, — no new problem evolved by the charm

of the hour. But even as the bud which is ripe to unfold awaits the breath of a perfect day to burst into beauty, so the moment had come for the solution of that unrest with which her bosom was freighted. Even Fate stays for opportunity.

He had been rambling on in a vein of philosophical cynicism, called forth by the incidents of the morning; but now he too had grown silent, and walked thoughtfully, twisting the ends of his mustache. He glanced furtively at his companion, and his shoulder touched hers with sympathetic pressure.

They had reached a point where a grassy embassage, in the form of a crescent, bordered the path. The space had been cleared to accommodate a stone statue of a sylvan divinity which adorned its centre, and at one side, adjacent to the shrubbery, there was a rustic bench. Mrs. Fielding turned her steps in the direction of the latter.

"Let us sit down," she said.

From their point of view they could see the western horizon, glowing through a tracery of leaves and boughs. It was a sunset in keeping with the mellowness of the day that was dying, for the dun of the autumn cloud-banks was suffused with the silver and sapphire of summer skies. The shadow of the goddess trailed across the grass.

She leaned back in the corner of the bench, while Stoughton, bending forward, pierced with the point of his cane the fallen leaves at his feet.

"We see that sunset," she said softly, "as we

see happiness in this world,—through prison bars.”

The young man turned at the sound of her voice. The yellow light fell on her face and glorified its intensity. She sought to elude his gaze.

“Ethel,” he whispered hoarsely, and he seized her hand with a passionate grasp, “what is there to prevent us from loving each other?”

The words that he spoke were as the echo of the thoughts with which her brain was throbbing.

She looked up, and their glances met in a blaze of mutual transport. He bent forward and kissed her. Even at the moment Woodbury Stoughton was conscious that the feeling he entertained for this woman was a passion which would pall with the gratification of desire, and that the capability of deep, entrancing love was no longer his.

But she, unmindful of the cold light in his eye, grasped his hand with both of hers. “My God!” she murmured ecstatically; and then, as the import of her phrase forced itself upon her, “No, no; *thou* art my god for ever and ever.”

This same afternoon Isabel Stoughton had ordered her victoria. She felt the need of a little fresh air, for the illness of baby had confined her to the house the last few days. She had not, in fact, driven out before since returning to town, and it exhilarated her to be once more in the midst of the city's bustle. Leaning back against the cushions, she took in with enjoyment the familiar sights

of the streets, and observed the changes that had occurred during her absence. Now and then the lifted hat of some acquaintance, whom she had not seen all summer, would bring a gladsome smile to her face.

Her months at Newport had not been especially happy. The cares of her household and the whirl of gayety in which she was immersed had not, to be sure, left her much leisure for scrutinizing her emotions; but she had ever been conscious of a certain wound about the heart, which was none the less real because she did not pause to poultice it. The glamour of wealth, and the knowledge that she was admired and courted were paltry compensation in her eyes for the indifference of her husband. She had come by degrees to perceive the futility of her efforts to win him back to her by appealing to his sensibility. Pride, too, stepped in to fortify her conclusions in this regard, and she had ceased to intrude herself upon him. She no longer questioned him concerning his plans and ambitions, nor allowed solicitude for the success of his undertakings to betray itself in her behavior.

And yet she had not brought herself to admit that Woodbury no longer loved her. She found excuses and explanations for his neglect in the multitude of the demands upon his time, and in her own deficiencies. She realized more vividly every day how lacking she was in those qualities which fit one to be an agreeable companion to a man of his ability. She was proud of him, too. His

success was balm to her wounded feelings. He was at least her husband. He belonged to her; and his triumphs were in a certain sense hers. If she only persevered and showed him how deeply she loved him, the time would come when he would recognize this, and all would be happy in her life once more.

To humor him she had gone much into society, and tried to find pleasure and distraction in the amusements of the gay watering-place. There were moments even when she felt the thrill of pleasure at the manifest admiration which she inspired. She was conscious of progress as regards the graces of fashionable life. Her lapses in conventionalities were no longer conspicuous. She had begun to suspect that perhaps, after all, she was able to compete in intelligence with the contemporaries of her own sex. Had not her father often told her that she ought to have been born a boy, she had such a good head for figures? Patience, patience! All would yet be well, and *he* would love her.

Such was the burden of her thoughts as she rolled over the pavements in her comfortable victoria, up Fifth Avenue and to the gates of the Park. It would be lovely in the Park this afternoon!

"Drive on," she said to the servant, who turned to inquire if she wished to enter.

As she drove through the gateway, a stylish dog-cart passed in the opposite direction, and its occupant raised his hat pleasantly. It was Mr. Tom Fielding.

The incident clouded for a little the current of her hopefulness, for the stories of her husband's attentions to the wife of this man came to mind. She had always striven, when her stepmother made insinuations of the kind, to banish the tales as unworthy of credence. There could be no foundation for them. Of course Woodbury was a friend of Mrs. Fielding, and enjoyed her society. Their intimacy was a pleasant diversion,—that was all. Did she herself not see them together, and understand their relation to each other?

These were the replies with which Isabel was wont to allay the suspicions of Mrs. Idlewild; but the pain in her own heart, it is needless to say, found little solace therefrom. Still she would not believe that he was false to her. It could not be. He was too honest, too good, too kind for that. She did him wrong to suspect him even; she was unreasonable. He was simply amusing himself. Mrs. Fielding was charming and clever. A great many people in society carried on little flirtations of this sort, which were completely harmless. She would put the idea of anything else out of her mind. Still, the circumstance that Mr. Fielding and she should each be alone threw a shade of melancholy over her previously buoyant mood, that she could not wholly dispel. Was he unhappy too? she wondered. People said he was very fond of his wife, but that she did not care for him. He had a pleasant face,—a little grave and heavy-looking, though. He was not nearly as hand-

some as Woodbury. Where was Woodbury this afternoon? Probably worrying over his canvass. How base of those Reformers to treat him so, after all his brave conduct!

She was winding along the smooth Park roads, bounded on either side by a stretch of close-clipped green. The populace were enjoying the charming weather, loitering about the grass and watching the demeanor of the bears and other zoölogical specimens collected by the City Fathers for their amusement. Her carriage skirted the margins of ponds dotted with the tiny white-winged ships of children whose merry laughter formed a complement to the golden sunshine. Now leaving behind the more frequented portions of the garden, she found herself passing through gentle undulations of knoll and dale. A brace of tame deer stared out at her unconcernedly from an adjacent thicket, wrinkling their noses superciliously. The sward here and there was gay with dandelions, the final largess of the departed season.

"Thomas, you may stop. Wait for me here, please."

The fancy had seized her that she would stroll a little. She alighted from the victoria, and followed the bendings of a footpath which led under the trees. The woods and fields of her New England home had nurtured in her a keen love of nature, and made her alive to beauties that escape the uncultivated eye.

Suddenly she gave a gesture of delight, and,

stooping on one knee, plunged her fingers among the herbage that bordered the path. She plucked therefrom a sprig of green, which she turned about as if to make sure of its character. It was a four-leaved clover, a badge of sentiment dear to rustic imaginations. As she gazed on the prize her eyes became soft with reverie, and a smile of content parted the ruddy lips. It seemed to her an augury of hope for the future, suggesting an end to all her difficulties.

She was on the point of rising from her kneeling posture, when her lifted glance became suddenly riveted by a sight discerned through the shrubbery. She gave a start ; and a look of mingled horror and anguish, succeeded by the flush of rage, came over her face. She had seen, across the screen of foliage, her husband's lips touch those of Mrs. Fielding.

Isabel started to her feet, and stood with wild, dazed eyes, her hand pressed against her heart as if to stay its fierce beating. Once she turned, designing to burst through the leafy barrier and confound their sin with her presence ; but, realizing perhaps the paltry satisfaction to be won from such a scene, she left the spot, and retraced her steps to the carriage.

She managed to control herself sufficiently to tell the man to drive straight home. She lay back with shut eyes, powerless to think. The shades of twilight were already deepening, the throng of loiterers had vanished, and a gray mist which

hugged the earth was creeping over the Park. The air was full of the shrill whistles of the city's workshops marking the close of toil. But all she was conscious of was that ghastly picture of the lovers sitting side by side, with passion in their eyes, under the shadow of the sylvan goddess.

The carriage jolted over the pavements, and through the glare of the streets already flickering with artificial light. As she reached the house a servant, who had been on the lookout, came running down the steps as if to intercept her.

"Excuse me, ma'am ; but they've just sent word from the other house that Mr. Idlewild is ill."

"What, my father? — ill?"

"Yes, ma'am," gasped the man, who was trembling at the effect of his words ; "the messenger said he had been took with a fit, and that you were to go there the moment you got back."

"Very well. Tell Thomas to drive as fast as possible."

Her brain swam with the terror that had seized upon her. Up to this moment bewilderment and rage had blinded her to the hopelessness of her misery ; but this new blow was easier to realize. There was no room for uncertainty as to its character. Her father, her dear father, sick, — perhaps dead, — and she not with him.

Mrs. Idlewild met her at the door.

"What is it? What is the matter with pa?"

"Your father has had an attack, dear. He fell in the hall just as he was going out, two hours

ago," said the elder woman, gravely. "The doctor says it is apoplexy."

"Is it serious? Is he alive?" Isabel faltered.

"Yes, dear, he is alive. You may go to him if you like."

As she entered the sick-chamber she would fain have fallen upon her knees and covered the beloved face with kisses, but an instant's glance deterred her from impetuosity. The room was only dimly lighted. A man, whom she recognized to be a physician, was standing over the bed, and turned with a serious bow at her approach. Her father lay unconscious, and convulsed with stertorous breathing, his countenance of a livid purple hue. She stooped and touched her lips to his forehead. It was plain he could recognize no one.

"Will he get well?" she asked.

"I hope so," said the doctor; but his tone was simply neutral. She sat down and held in hers the hand resting upon the counterpane. A muffled cough directed her eyes to the recesses of the chamber, where the outline of a woman's figure was visible. It must be the nurse. The idea of any one but herself watching beside her father filled her with repugnance.

Her stepmother entered the room and advanced to where she sat.

"I will take care of pa. He would not like to have a stranger near him," the girl whispered, almost defiantly.

"Certainly, dear. You shall stay if you wish."

The physician turned to Mrs. Idlewild. "There is nothing more to be done to-night. I have given Mrs. Barker the necessary instructions. I trust he may be better in the morning." He bowed and withdrew.

Who does not know the weariness of watching? Through that long night, and for many days and nights, Isabel sat by her father's bedside. The morning brought but little change. The symptoms were grave; so the doctors said who met in consultation; but then, too, the patient had an iron grasp on life. No one could foretell the result.

Upon that first evening the young wife had sent word that she should not return home. Her father, she said, was too ill for her to leave. Woodbury came in to inquire as to his condition, but she let her mother see him. The next day she took up her quarters here completely, never going from the house except for a little while in the morning to visit her baby when her husband was down town. She was satisfied that he would not complain of her desertion.

She was undergoing the terrible ordeal of facing the inevitable. During the silent watches of the night there was time, and to spare, for reflection. As the bewilderment and stunned sensation of the first days wore off, she realized the misery of her situation. The future seemed to promise nothing but unhappiness.

She reviewed in her mind the entire course of her life. She could see that all her being had been

centred in two persons. Upon her father first, and then upon her husband, the wealth of her nature had been poured out. She had loved them with her whole heart; that had been life to her; and now at one stroke both had been taken away!

Wherefore should this be? What had she done to deserve this? She experienced now, for the first time, an awful sense of wonderment as to the signification of life. It had seemed before so natural to live. The mere delight of having these two to twine her heart about had sufficed to make her glory in existence; just as a flower lifts its head toward the sun, nor asks the reason why. But now the barrenness of the years to come stretched out before her like a waste of arid sand.

She, as all children in Christian countries, had been taught that there is a God who made her, and that she should love and worship him. She had gone to church with the rest, and tried to realize the meaning of what she heard there. But so great was her vitality that the mere fact of living had seemed enough for her. She had been at a loss to understand what people meant by loving God with all their hearts. She had heard and read that this life is but a state of discipline to prepare mortals for another world, and that one should beware of too great centring of the affection on human things; but the force of such expressions had been lost upon her.

She remembered them now. They came back to her as she sat by her dying father's side, groping

in the darkness of her agony for some escape from despair. Was it then true that she had been put into the world to be tortured,—true that an all-wise Heavenly Father had given her the power of affection, in order through it to bruise and trample upon her heart, under the plea of discipline? Discipline! why did she need discipline? Was it wrong of her to have loved these dear ones so deeply? Wrong! She could not help loving them. It was her nature to do so. And yet it was necessary to chastise her. Human creatures were born full of sin, and were purified through suffering. She ought to submit herself to the divine will. Being purged in the fire, she would grow in grace and become reconciled with God. The recurrence of the oft-heard phrases of religion struck her with abhorrence. They seemed to her a ghastly conceit. The sole comfort they held out to her agonized heart was the pitiful explanation that it was all for the best. The best! Whose best? It could not be for hers, for she wished no better happiness than that which she had known. Oh, why had she ever been born?

One evening, about three weeks after Mr. Idlewild had been taken ill, Isabel was sitting in his room, as usual. She and the nurse divided the time of watching between them. The invalid had made but little progress; in fact, the doctors had warned the family that the worst was to be expected. Nevertheless, he had appeared better during the past twenty-four hours, or rather had shown some indications of returning consciousness. The old

man had seemed once to recognize his daughter's face bending over him, for he had smiled and faintly pressed her hand. He articulated excitedly at times; it was plain that he fancied himself once more the manager of a circus. Mrs. Idlewild had seen fit to send for a clergyman. Her husband might at any moment regain his senses, and she expressed herself as old-fashioned enough to desire that he should have the consolations of religion at the last.

It was a warm evening; and Isabel, weary with her watch, had fallen asleep for a few minutes. She awoke with a start of self-reproach, which was allayed upon finding her father resting quietly. As she composed herself once more in her seat, she became aware of noises—that resembled the cheers of a crowd—coming up from the street below, through the window, a crack of which was open. She approached, and peered between the curtain and the pane. The banker's house was so situated as to command from the bay-window a view of the neighboring Square. The young woman was surprised at the sight of a vast sea of people flooding the pavements and the adjacent park, which was bright with the glare of electric lights. The gaze of this throng seemed to be turned in a particular direction, and every now and then a jubilant and almost savage yell caused their heads to sway like a forest. Isabel opened the sash and stepped out upon the balcony. As she turned her head her eyes encountered the blank side of a broad

building, upon which a stereopticon threw a large white disk. At the moment an advertisement of a popular organ factory was visible on its surface ; but suddenly this was withdrawn from view, and an election despatch substituted in its place, which read : " Utica gives Doubleday 1,600 majority." Straightway the voices of the multitude rose in another mighty cry of triumph, which seemed to shake the earth, as it came over Isabel that this was the night after the State election.

In the distress of the past weeks she had lost all account of time. The circumstance of her husband's canvass had never once occurred to her ; but now she found herself leaning forward with eagerness to learn the result. She recalled how indignant she had been at the action of the Civil Service Reformers in throwing over Woodbury ; and, as she stood there watching the successive returns, she could not help wondering if she might not have been deceived about him in this respect also. But this was only for a moment. Her love was stronger than her doubts, for she felt her heart beating with the throb of suspense, — a suspense that was freighted with longings for his success. She hoped he would win ; it would make him so unhappy to be defeated. It was his darling ambition to go to Congress.

She was familiar enough with the politics of the day to perceive from the returns that the Democrats were making vast gains all over the State and country. Town after town showed majorities in

favor of the party out of power. The fever of dissatisfaction with the party in power had spread to such a degree that it was becoming evident a notorious demagogue and trickster had been elected Governor of a neighboring Commonwealth,—a fact which seemed to tickle the humor of the crowds, for they roared with laughter at every additional indication of his success as if it were a huge joke. “A tidal wave has struck us!” shouted some enthusiastic individual, and the vast throng took up the cry with a cheer. In the intervals of the despatches the heads of various well-known politicians were thrown upon the disk, to be greeted, as the case might be, with applause or groans. In many instances these appeared upside down.

Suddenly, after a little interval in the proceedings, she was startled at seeing her husband's face in the luminous frame, side by side with one which she recognized to be that of his rival, Finchley. The countenance of neither was sufficiently familiar to call forth much enthusiasm from the populace; but as it were in a flash they melted away, and in their stead she saw a bulletin which caused her blood to bound; and on the instant a fierce yell of delight, in which the name of Finchley was discernible, startled the night. She grasped the railing for support, and gazed at the inscription which, written in a florid hand, read: “Returns from twenty wards give Finchley (Dem. & Ind.) 1,700 majority for Congress.”

Isabel gave a shiver, and turned back into the

room. (As she advanced she became aware of a figure standing on the other side of the bed,—a man's figure clothed in canonicals. He was looking down at the face on the pillow ; and something in his bearing must have excited her apprehension, for she rushed forward and bent over the couch. She uttered an ejaculation, and seized eagerly the hand upon the coverlid, as if to convince herself that her fear was groundless. Then with a terrible cry, "He is dead ! he is dead !" she buried her face in the blankets.

She looked up presently, at a gentle touch upon her shoulder. The stranger was standing over her with a look of compassion on his priestly countenance.

He held out his hands to her : "God will comfort you, my daughter."

"No, no !" she cried, with a gesture of shrinking, — "not that." /

Her tone had a harsh ring, like that of the old man upon the bed. She went to the other side of the room and sat down. Presently the door opened and a woman entered. It was Mrs. Idlewild. Said Isabel in a firm, hard voice : "He is dead !"

XIV.

THE spring following the death of Peter Idlewild witnessed the departure of his widow for Paris to join her step-son Jack, who was already established in the "Latin quarter" of that attractive city, with the design of acquiring a knowledge of French. The next steamer carried across the Atlantic Woodbury Stoughton, whom the newspapers referred to as "desirous of a short sojourn in foreign parts after the fatigues of the recent canvass." The will of the late banker had made no provision for his son-in-law, and rumor declared him to be somewhat straitened pecuniarily. The day after he had sailed, however, it was announced that his wife had entered a libel against him for divorce. She had never returned to her own home since the dreadful evening upon which she lost both husband and father.

There is a room in one of Europe's picturesque ruins known as the Chamber of the Grand Duchess, from the broad window-seat of which the visitor looks down upon and over the blue waters of Lake Geneva. It is the upper room in the famous castle of Chillon; and so lovely is the prospect therefrom across the broad expanse, — which,

whether ruffled or peaceful, is never long the same, — that the traveller, lost in admiration, forgets the horrors of the dungeon beneath, with its low-sweeping columns and worn stone floor, where Bonnard and others languished for years, fettered to the iron rings which yet are visible. As, with the approach of twilight, the mountains seem to descend and group themselves like giant guardians about the lake, one even forgets for a moment that ghastly *oubliette* which yawns below, but encircled by a railing, as though to deter the fascinated tourist from seeking to investigate the reality of the missing fourth step, the sheer descent, the knives, the silent watery tomb. Where nature is so beautiful, it seems impossible that man could have been so cruel.

It was on the window-seat of this ruined Chamber of the Grand Duchess that Ethel Fielding was resting one afternoon in the early summer. Her husband was in Paris on business, and she was sitting there alone. The idlers of Lausanne would no longer have occasion to wonder what the relations might be between the pretty, charmingly dressed American and her fellow countryman, who was at this moment on his way to London.

It was a lovely afternoon. Earlier the wind and clouds had been rampant, but the water had regained its deep, tranquil blue, and the lights and shadows of the Dent du Midi were beautiful to behold.

But she who looked out over the lake's calm sur-

face had no peace in her heart. Her face was pale as the snow in the angle of a mountain where the sun's rays do not fall. The man for whom she had sacrificed truth and virtue had a few hours ago acknowledged that he no longer loved her. She had guessed this secret many days before, but just now he had confessed it at her asking. It was foolish of her, so he said, to have followed him to Europe, and he had been unwise to humor her by coming to Switzerland. He had lost money, — large sums of money, — and must return home to regulate his affairs. Thus had they parted.

There are worse fates than the *oubliette*, for all its missing fourth step and pointed knives, to impale the victim of the sheer descent ; and man has the power to be even more cruel to-day than in the distant century when the duchess gazed from her chamber window over the same expanse of water, lying blue and placid in the shadow of the eternal mountains.

Meanwhile Eugene Finchley, now the Honorable Eugene Finchley, had been winning golden opinions for himself. He had behaved better than any one would have imagined, considering his previous training, — so said the Reform element, whose coalition with the Democrats had obtained him his election. The politicians were becoming impatient, and there were many to sympathize with Mr. Alderman O'Rourke in his pathetic query, "What will the harvest be?" It even had begun to be whispered there was to be no harvest at all.

Eugene Finchley's courtship of Isabel had been silent, but terribly genuine. Then perhaps for the first time in his life he had begun to realize his own deficiencies. After that evening at Newport, when his hopes of happiness seemed to him forever dashed to the ground, he had for some months wooed vehemently his quondam goddesses, of whom *la veuve Clicquot* was the most celebrated. But even while he drove his dog-cart and gave gorgeous suppers to the artists of the stage in the guise of a dissipated good-for-nothing, he had not been able to close his ears to the whisper of the nobler aspirations which his now futile love had quickened into being. Presently he had sobered down again, and with a heavy heart taken up the routine of a money-making life. Men pronounced him changed, — quieter, so they said ; while the politicians wondered at his squeamishness regarding measures at which he had in the old days never been known to bolt.

And yet, when this has been said, the excuse of a deficient early training was one he sadly needed to invoke as a target against shafts of criticism. The sole claim he has upon our human esteem and sympathy is the fact that his heart was not wholly rendered callous by the life it was his lot to lead. If in his partial appreciation of his lack of culture he may have felt a pang at times at recalling the low standards of a father whose moral vitality had been exhausted by efforts to resist the temptation to give short weight in his capacity as a country grocer, or

the ignorance of a mother whose solicitude for her son's welfare did not extend to the modulation of the voice or decorous table manners, still old age was made bearable for his parents by the handsome gifts he sent. So, too, the ardor of his love for Isabel is a trait that prompts us to mitigate the severity of our judgments in his regard. Of all the friends of Mrs. Stoughton there was no one whose sympathy for her afflictions was more genuine than his. Before taking his departure for Washington, he wrote her a letter in which the expression of his concern for her sorrow was supplemented by a few words to imply how deep had been the impression on his own nature of the influence of their former friendship. It was the laconic letter of a business man; but she to whom it was addressed read between the lines what was left unwritten.

Arthur Remington had leased a small house in the suburbs of New York, — a half-hour's ride in the train from the city.

"I wonder if she would n't come to us after a little. The change would help her, perhaps." So said his wife, Dorothy, one day, a few weeks after the death of Mr. Idlewild. Isabel had been much in their thoughts of late, so wretched did her fate appear beside their own great happiness.

About a month later, Remington came home one evening looking very thoughtful.

"Dorothy," he said, "Mrs. Stoughton declines to see her husband any more; in fact, she has applied for a divorce. She came to me for

advice as to a lawyer, and I sent her to John Ferguson."

"But did n't you try to dissuade her? Oh, Arthur, divorces are such dreadful things. There will be such a scandal."

"I know it. I represented all that to her, but my words produced no effect. She had evidently thought the matter out, and was determined. I've asked her to come and pass a few days with us. You know you spoke of doing so."

"Oh, I am glad you did. Perhaps we can persuade her to change her mind. And she is coming?"

"Yes. She is terribly altered, Dorothy. She looks worn, and ten years older. When I impressed upon her that she ought at least to consider her child, she tightened her lips, — you remember her father's expression; it made me think of him, — and said, 'I loved that man with all my heart. He has wronged me, and I will never see him again. I do not wish to bear his name.'"

"But what induced her to come to you, Arthur?"

"She said she had so few friends whom she could trust, that she was obliged to do so. 'I know,' she said, 'you are a great friend of his, but you have always been very kind to me. You will be just, I am sure;' and her glance seemed to pierce me, it was so searching. I told her how much I pitied her, and that I would do anything to assist her; 'and,' I added, 'as a proof that you trust me, you must come and stay with us. My wife was speaking,

only a few days ago, of inviting you.' Rather to my surprise, she consented."

"Poor girl!" murmured Dorothy; and through the evening the young wife was very pensive. She could not help contrasting her own lot with hers to whose sorrows she had just listened. For, indeed, with marriage a great happiness had come to Dorothy. The love of her husband had grown to be infinitely precious to her; and her own feeling toward him sometimes frightened her, it seemed so essential to her life. Still, in the midst of their great joy they often dwelt upon the world's strange inequalities, and grieved at the ills of existence. The old spirit of analysis and speculation continued to possess them both, and served to foster a sympathy which, though at moments mystified, supplied the key-note of their religion. Their thoughts alike were bent to do those things in daily life that seemed to them healthful for intelligent, progressive beings, and to keep alive in their hearts a trust that such efforts were in unison with some eternal system.

Isabel Stoughton came to them a few days later. She was, indeed, much changed, though some might have considered her countenance more interesting than before. It had gained in thoughtfulness and gravity, but was thinner; and her blue eyes seemed faded. She was silent, too, and a prey to reverie, as though she were pondering some vast arrears of thought, as was indeed the case. So she admitted at last to Dorothy, against whose sympathy

she did not for long seek to bar the door. The two girls, so unlike and individual in their respective ways, became great friends. At the end of the fortnight which Isabel passed with the Remingtons, she resolved to lease for the winter a pretty little house adjoining theirs, whither she moved her baby and establishment. Her step-mother was anxious to have her accompany her to Europe ; but the other plan pleased Isabel best.

As spring approached, they used often to take their work into the little garden which separated their houses, and chat under the warmth of the mellowing sunshine. Dorothy, whose deep convictions as to the sacredness of the marriage tie made her an eloquent declaimer against divorce, induced her new-found friend at last to withdraw her suit. Isabel talked much about the past — the past before she came to New York — in a spirit of fond reminiscence, and yet, too, of criticism. She had been happy, but she had been wayward and head-strong. She would not listen to dear Aunt Mitty, whose angular, prim methods seemed unlikely to help her to ape the superficial smartness of her village playmates. Yes, her education had been woefully lax ; for after her faculties had been sharpened by village wear and tear, a polishing process was tried by her step-mother, and with success, too, in a certain sense, for she had proved adaptive. But it was only a polishing process. She had been brought face to face with the great world without any real knowledge of life. She had thought so

little on her own account, and her conceptions were so volatile and artificial.

"I envy you, Dorothy, your bringing up," she murmured. "It was so different with me. None of my girl friends cared for books or serious things. We used always to be making eyes at boys and wishing for adventures. Most of them had their own way even more than I did; for Aunt Mitty did her best for me."

Among other subjects, as they grew more intimate, they came to speak of Finchley. Isabel alluded to the fact of his having written to her, and to numerous acts of kindness during the first weeks of her distress.

"I think, my dear, that man was very much in love with you." Perhaps a feminine love of match-making caused a shadow of regret to disturb for an instant the complete serenity of Dorothy's attitude toward divorce; but it was only for an instant. She was not a woman who permitted instinct to interfere with principle.

Isabel did not reply at once. "Yes, Dorothy, I suppose he was. His letter was very kind. He wrote that his acquaintance with me had been the greatest influence of his life for good. It was very sweet to me to read that, and to think I had been a help to anybody."

Doubtless, as she sat looking into the distance, the thought passed through her mind that she might have been happier with such a man, and that she had sacrificed his deep, honest love for a

paltry return. But the involuntary sad shake of her head which followed after told that if her heart were to give again, the sacrifice would be repeated. She loved her husband still with all her being, though she would fain deny it to herself.

It was Dorothy who interrupted her reverie. "My husband was speaking of Mr. Finchley only last night. He said that he was a victim to the money-craving spirit of the day."

"It is true, Dorothy ; and it is true of me equally with him. I have thought of that often of late. The past seems to me a dream, as if I had lived without knowing it and only just awaked to recognize what I am. Oh, Dorothy, I want to do something useful with my money. I want to help others to avoid the misery I have had to suffer. There are so many in the world that need our aid."

Dorothy glanced up at her as she spoke, and was struck by the strength of her expression. The firm lips were tightly compressed, and her whole countenance revealed an intense fervor of thought. Instinctively she contrasted the powerful vitality of her friend with her own more delicate organization with almost a feeling of envy. The nervous vigor that illumined her face might be a potent factor either for good or for bad.

"This money may turn out to be a great cause for thankfulness, Isabel. It has come to help you bear your sorrow. Only think what good you will be able to do with it."

The other was silent for a little after Dorothy had finished. "You mean," she said quietly, "you believe that God has sent me unhappiness to punish me, and has given me this money in token of his mercy?"

"May it not be so, dear?" Recollection was in the mind of Dorothy, as she spoke, of the oft-repeated opinions and sophistries of Woodbury Stoughton in relation thereto, and in her conscientiousness she shrank from saying more than she could repeat amen to with all her soul. But as the wistful glance of the sad girl met hers, words came to her lips that refused to be stemmed in their utterance. "I believe, dear Isabel, that all our afflictions are sent to us for our good. We cannot now understand many things, and it is very, very hard to bear them. But we shall some day, dear. It must be so, — it must be so."

The sweet voice trembled with sympathy; and God must have looked down with tenderness at that pair of earnest women upon whose faces were written severally the faith which springs from love and that groping after light which is the comrade of righteous anguish. The eyes of the sufferer filled with tears, yet she shook her head mournfully, gazing far into the deepening shadows of the afternoon, as though life seemed only a mist that balked the straining sight.

But later, when they were together in the dim twilight of the sitting-room, where only the ticking of the clock and the whisper of the ashes marred